Among the French Folk

E. H. Moggridge

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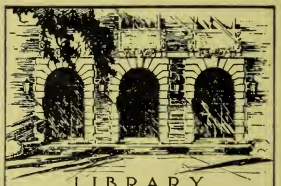
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AMONG THE FRENCH FOLK

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SKETCHES FROM REAL LIFE

BY

E. H. MOGGRIDGE

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THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY
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PREFACE

THE writer has been engaged for many years in connection with the *Mission Populaire Evangélique de France*, better known from the name of its founder as 'The McAll Mission,' and so, by constant and familiar contact with the people, has had ample opportunity of studying their character, needs, modes of thought, and ways of living, both in Paris and the provinces. The author of these sketches, therefore, ventures to present them to the British and American public in the hope that their perusal may invoke and increase a kindly, prayerful, and helpful interest in the welfare of a people among whom the Lord Himself is so manifestly working at this present time.

The special aims of this little book are to deepen the interest of the reader in the French folk; to explore some of the less familiar fields of French life; to describe some of the present-day forms of Christian work among the French people; and thus to stimulate the faith and prayer and labour of English and American Christians on their behalf.

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AMONG THE FRENCH FOLK

CHAPTER I.

MARKET DAY AT MÉNILMONTANT.

'A GLORIOUS day to spend in the country!' said a friend to us. 'Will you come and pay some visits with me at Manor-Rising? I will take you through the Lane of the Wild Roses, along Acacia Road, and past the Cascades, to the City of Cornflowers, whither I am bound to-day.'

'Delightful!' we replied, for we wanted a holiday, feeling somewhat overdone with busy Paris life and work during the long winter just passing away. Already we sniffed afar off the scent of the budding trees, and heard the silvery tinkling of the falling cascades.

So away we both sped by train, from the extreme west, round by the grassy fortifications, to the far east of the French capital, and in half an hour descended at Manor-Rising—one of us at least a sobered mortal.

Our pleasant dreams of country life had vanished into thin air. For on the way our friend had recounted how that fifty years ago the laughing villages and vine-clad cottages that lay beyond the

suburbs had been swallowed up in the ever-advancing 'civilization' of the great city. The green slopes of Ménilmontant (the Rising-Manor), and the shady lanes and lilac-gardens of Belleville and La Villette, had been turned into streets, courts, passages, and 'impasses' (*cul-de-sacs*). On the ruins of the rustic dwellings of the villagers had grown up blocks of lofty houses, six and seven stories high, the over-crowded abodes of the artisans, petty officials, and clerks of Paris. Ménilmontant, with Belleville and La Villette, had become the special quarter of the poor and working classes, though Grenelle, on the western side of the city, also shares that honour.

The streets of Ménilmontant are for the most part wide, and the air is good. It is near the open country, and away over the earthworks that surround the city, one can see the green fields and gardens of Charonne, Bagnolet, and Romainville. From the heights beyond thundered, in the days of the siege and of the commune, the guns of Fort Rosny, Fort Noisy, and Romainville. Many indeed were the slain in those fratricidal days, for in the cemetery of Père la Chaise, close at hand, in the park of the Buttes Chaumont, near Belleville, on the heights of northern Montmartre, and at La Roquette, were spent the last expiring efforts of the insurrection of 1871 while Paris was in flames.

Paris is, as we know, divided into twenty *arrondissements*, or wards, each with its own town hall, mayor, and council. Ménilmontant and Belleville form the twentieth arrondissement, the poorest but

one in Paris ; though at Belleville, dotted about here and there, are many comfortable little villas, standing in sunny gardens, and inhabited by small proprietors. The population of Ménilmontant is rather dense, and the houses of the poorest classes in the courts, alleys, and *cités* often consist of very small, low, two-storied tenements, run up hurriedly with lath and plaster on any empty space or cleared spot in the quarter, and deficient in many necessary hygienic comforts—the abode mostly of beggars and ragpickers.

It was in this revolutionary twentieth arrondissement we landed one fine spring morning. We had strolled through Almond Street and Sweetbriar Lane, past the Cascades—in winter a muddy back-street—till we reached the broad boulevard of Ménilmontant, the great thoroughfare leading southward from La Villette, past the old cemetery of Père la Chaise, to the Place de la Nation (formerly the Place du Trône).

It was market day—Tuesday. Along the centre of the wide avenue for nearly a mile, between the rows of plane trees, and flanked with country carts and gigs, thousands of tiny little stalls were ranged side by side, in two long canvas-covered rows, with a narrow passage down the middle.

The bustle and din were very great. All the good folks of Ménilmontant were out marketing, and there was choice enough to please all tastes and suit all purses. Here one little stall was completely taken up with piles of eggs, crimson and white—crimson, hard-boiled ; white, new-laid, or supposed to be so.

Next came a stall laden with slices of great yellow pumpkins, good for soup, and used as a vegetable — market value, one sou (one halfpenny) per slice.

There stood a miller in his white blouse and huge broad-brimmed felt hat, surrounded with his sacks of flour, white, black, and brown (wheat, buckwheat, and rye); and at his elbow his brother the burly butcher, busily preparing *bifteks* and other small cuts to suit his poorer customers. On the opposite side a 'merchant,' with a larger salt-fish stall than usual, accommodated an old woman—rent-free, it is to be hoped—with a corner for her carrots and turnips, salads, cress, 'old monks' beards,' and half-cabbages.

Gingerbread, apples, and piles of golden oranges gladdened the children's eyes, temptingly arranged between halves and quarters of rabbits on one side, and pigs' snouts and ears—the stock-in-trade of the next neighbour—on the other. Cheeses, too, were in plenty, cut into seductive penny and half-penny bits; real cheeses! Some as white as cream and plaster could make them, and others so black that they must have come out of the crypts of the Pantheon, when those hoarded stores were found—alas, too late!—and carted away as rubbish after the siege was over. So black! and yet the old stall-keeper avouched solemnly that an old gentleman *connoisseur*, 'a citizen of Montmartre,' always preferred this article to any other, and came to fetch some of it weekly!

Crush and din, crush and din! Down the narrow

middle passage the thrifty housewives, pushing their way with their baskets, were laying in provision for their hungry husbands when they returned from their work, for the Paris workman generally remains out all day, and returns at night to dine or sup at home

The air was full of cries, if not of music.

'Quick! quick! my cheeses, my cheeses! Fine Camembert, and new Gruyère, two sous a quarter!'

'Oranges! oranges! Fine and good!' rings out a male voice, broken into by a child's shrill cry—

'See! see! my chickweed! my green chickweed!'

Suddenly a wild shriek rose above the din. 'Hurry up, ladies! hurry up! Knickerbockers for sale! Little boys' knickerbockers!'

We shall not get a chance, evidently, if we do not 'hurry up.' There is such a run upon the 'knicks.'

But what is that sepulchral voice crying just behind us? We turn. It is 'sackcloth and ashes' walking along! A tall cadaverous figure hung round with sackcloth.

'*Sacs! sacs! sacs!*' he discordantly cries as he stalks along through the crowd. '*Sacs* for sale! to clean the floors and coppers with!'

Half stunned with the noise, the rival cries of the vendors, the shrill chattering of the women, the wailing of the weary babes, the cackling of the geese and hens, confined in their baskets and making the best of their time till some wealthy customer takes them home for his dinner, we endeavoured to make our way through the tightly wedged throng, and found ourselves face to face with an old woman—a

friend of my companion's—from the Cité de l'Avenir (the Court of the Future).

'Ah! good morning, Madame Binon. You have been making some good bargains, we hope?'

'Good morning, Mam'zelle! Yes, I have laid out my money well, I think. See! Peep into my basket! Here is half a cabbage—that's one sou; an onion and carrot—that's also one sou; then, look! here is one pound of pigskin-shreds—that's another sou.'

'Whatever for?' we asked.

'Why, to flavour my soup with. Most excellent! said the bright little old lady, with a merry twinkle in her eye. 'Then here is a quarter of Camembert cheese, a salt herring, and a little meal for pancakes; that is all. Those are my bargains. But, stay! I have also a stick of barley-sugar for my little grandson Paul, and a bunch of chickweed for the canary.'

Every one has a canary in the Court of the Future.

Presently we found ourselves once again on the avenue, having nearly stumbled over that important functionary, the parish bellringer, swinging his big bell as he rapidly strode along, his 'Ding-a-dong-ding, ding-a-dong-ding' being the warning that the hour had arrived for the market to close for that week.

Well pleased with their purchases, the laden housewives streamed away, for the most part to the bazaar just opposite us, where, on the pavement outside, they stood in groups, admiringly gazing at the endless piles of snowy ware displayed, and the lovely tin saucepans, coffee-pots, and frying-pans hung round about and glittering in the rays of the setting sun.

CHAPTER II.

THE FLIGHT OF THE PARTRIDGE.

A CHORUS of voices greeted Mam'zelle. 'Good day, Mam'zelle! When are you coming to visit us?' 'Mam'zelle, my husband is ill!' 'Mam'zelle, my daughter has lost her place!' 'Ah, Mam'zelle, Madame Bablin's baby died last night. Will you go and see her? And Madame Denis is in great trouble. I was to tell you if I met you,' said another. 'She lives, you know, in the Cité des Bluets' (Cornflower Court).

So away we went to the Cité des Bluets.

At the end of a long winding passage we found the court, consisting of straggling blocks and rows of low houses or shanties, inhabited by very poor people. We were courteously received by the 'lady' we went to visit. 'Mam'zelle' was offered the choice of a seat on the bed, or on a heap of selected rags at the side of it; while we were invited to 'repose' ourselves on a comfortable bottomless chair, the only one in the poor, bare room. This chair was of great value in the eyes of the ladies, the widows who owned the room, as they were *répailleuses*, or 'chair-

bottomers,' and the said chair represented to them to-morrow's dinner.

Poor, very poor, they were, but never to be seen without clean aprons and snow-white caps, and ever happy in the assurance of the changeless love of the God they had learned to know and trust—happy in the salvation that Mam'zelle had been the means of bringing to them, as to many others. For Mam'zelle was the welcome friend and visitor in many of the poor dwellings of the quarter, and was known among the people by no other name than 'Mam'zelle.'

Other ladies might come and go, and talk to and teach them, and each had her special designation. 'The tall lady,' 'the little lady,' 'the stout lady,' 'the grand lady,' 'the blonde,' 'the brunette,' 'the dark' —all were known and liked. But Mam'zelle was '*Mam'zelle*' *par excellence*, supreme in the eyes and affections of the poor women, who loved her and regarded her as their own special friend and protectress of many years' standing. She was as distinct from all others as the *Grande Mademoiselle* in her day, at the Court of Versailles, in the reign of Louis XIV. They listened weekly to her loving appeals at the hall in the neighbourhood—in the same street, by-the-by, as the Anarchist Club of the quarter!

The promise of two more chairs to repair for a poor widow in the neighbourhood, the cost to be put down to Mam'zelle's account, gave great satisfaction, and the women chatted away gaily. Many inquiries were made as to how long the mothers' meeting was to continue, and when the annual festival

of coffee and cakes—a much-relished treat—was to take place, and for how long Mam'zelle was going to leave them for her yearly holiday, and so on.

'Mam'zelle's little family goes on increasing. There will be no place in the hall left soon. I reckoned a hundred ladies present last week.'

'Yes, but thou forgettest, Marie, that many of the little family are sick,' said her companion, 'or looking for work, and we may not be so numerous next week.'

'Madame Morelle begged me to tell Mam'zelle that her husband was ill, and Madame Morelle would like Mam'zelle to call and talk to him. He is a brass-burnisher by trade, an honest fellow, has been employed for years by the same master, but is too ill to work now; and you see, Mam'zelle, he is not like his wife, who loves to get to the meetings down there in the big hall, and hear the gentlemen explain the gospel to us.'

'They speak so well!' chimed in her friend. 'What they say warms one's heart. But Monsieur Morelle will not go there, and Mam'zelle would do well to go and see him.'

In a little while Mam'zelle was off to see the sick man. Again and again she visited him, and by degrees won him to listen to her words and prayers; and he promised her that as soon as he was well again he would go to the hall, and hear for himself the 'good things' his wife told him of.

Madame Morelle, with wise tact, had never forced the subject of religion on him, but prayed in secret that he might be led thither of God, and God was

answering her prayer. In spite of his irritation when 'religion' was mentioned, he had always loved his wife, and liked to please her; and somehow, since his illness, new thoughts had been stirring in his mind. The sense of sin against a loving, patient God had been created, and he secretly longed for pardon and peace.

In the hall he might hear what would help him, and had he not promised Mam'zelle he would go when well?

So one day he suddenly said to his wife, 'Where wilt thou that we go to-night, Madeleine? It is Sunday; we can go somewhere.'

She said nothing, but looked at him with her winning smile.

'Ah! I know where thou wouldest have me go. Come along, then; let us go to the hall.' And so to the hall they went.

Monsieur Morelle was a good singer. He had been a musician in his younger days. So he seated himself close to the harmonium, and joined in the hymns. 'I love those hymns; I sing them all now,' he afterwards said to his wife. 'And the lady who plays the organ is delighted, because, as thou knowest, I sing like a partridge!' So on he went, quietly drinking in the truth, till again illness struck him down—a mortal illness this time.

Mam'zelle must go to England shortly. How he would miss her visits, her reading, and her prayers! But he was ready now to go.

'Weep not, Madeleine,' he said to his wife, on his

dying day—'weep not; I am a believer in Jesus now. I know that I am safe. The partridge is flying away to sing in heaven. Wife, thou wilt meet him there.' And so the sweet singer fell asleep.

Alas! quite alone in the world now, husband and children all dead, the poor widow, her life in daily danger from heart-disease, earned her bread by such odd jobs as she could get, ever sober, patient, peaceful, and happy, fearlessly waiting the summons to join 'her partridge.' Mam'zelle's visits are her delight.

'You must give me a prayer to-day, Mam'zelle, as a souvenir of your visit. Indeed, you owe me two; for last time you were interrupted, and I lost it.'

Mam'zelle acceded to the request, and then gave her a few flowers, just purchased in the market.

'Ah, now I have two souvenirs!' she exclaimed.

Her history is somewhat remarkable, and will bear telling. It is the tale, as regards spiritual experience, of many an honest heart among the peasantry and artizans of France.

CHAPTER III.

ALIVE AMONG THE DEAD.

'I WAS born in the department of the Haute Saone in Franche-Comté, at Villars-Secsel, between Vesoul and Besançon. My father was a poor *sabottier*, with a wife and four children, and made his *sabots*[1] at home, from the white wood of the willows and poplars of the neighbouring forests. We wandered about a good deal. Sometimes we all worked at the foundry of the Marquis de Grammont in the Haut Rhin, and afterwards we went to Mârat, where my father was chosen parish shepherd, and took charge of all the sheep and cattle that grazed free on the common.

'I was then fourteen, and had to keep the horned cattle, and took them to and fro to pasture, till one day I was dragged by an obstinate, angry cow through the bramble bushes, and as I was as obstinate as the cow, I would not let her have her way, but held on to her, and was much hurt. So father, finding the work too rough for me, put me out to service.

[1] Wooden shoes worn by the French peasantry.

'Mother had died when I was young. I just remember her sweet, pale face, her large eyes and grey hair. I see her often in my dreams, and my earliest recollections are of how we children used to go into the woods in the early morning to gather fresh herbs, with the dew on them, which we used to burn, and then use the ashes to anoint her feeble and swollen limbs with. We lived hard, too. Our food was cabbage-soup, rye bread, a little lard or bacon sometimes, and very rarely a bit of meat. We gathered sloes and berries from the hedges, and made a kind of wine from them. It was very harsh and sour. The richer folk added a little sugar to it. We called it *piquette*. Then we pressed the oil from the beech nuts in the forest, and burnt it in our little lamps for light.

'After father's death, till I was seventeen, I lived with my aunts. They were really pious women, who taught me to pray and trust in God. I got day-work at the factory near, and earned fivepence a day and my food. Wages were low in those days.

'At seventeen I went to service at Dijon, with the wife of a brick merchant or dealer, who exchanged his tiles for apples and grain, brought down the canal in an old leaky boat belonging to him.

'One day in the late autumn I had gone down to the canal to wash, with my big basket full of linen, and while I was washing, some of the boats were driven violently against our old boat, and broke in the sides, and all the apples and grain fell out into

the water. Some men quickly turned off the water, and I and others jumped into the bed of the canal to pick up the apples and grain as best we could, when all of a sudden, without any warning, the sluices were opened, and away went my basket of linen, carried off by the flood. I rushed after it, but was swept off my feet by the rapidly rising water, and was speedily sucked under by one of the many boats that were floating about. After some time I was dragged out by one of the boatmen with grappling-irons, insensible, swollen, and nearly black from the shock, the chill, and the bruises, and was taken off to the hospital. The doctors said my "blood was frozen."

'At midnight I sank into a profound lethargy. Motionless I lay, and speechless, but hearing everything that passed around me. The attendant called the Sister in charge. She felt my body, put her hand on my heart, and said, "Dead! quite dead! The limbs are already cold. Call the corpse-bearers to take away the body."

'I heard it all, but could neither move nor speak. They wrapped me up in a piece of coarse sacking, and laid a thinner, looser piece over my face, through which I could breathe and dimly see. Then two bearers seized me, one holding my feet, the other my head, and carried me off to the dissecting-room, or amphitheatre.

'As they hurried along the corridor, one said to the other, "Not so fast! not so fast! we shall let her drop."

'"No harm if we do," he replied. "She is dead, quite dead, and the dead feel nothing."

'Then they laid me down between two rows of corpses on a large marble slab. Oh! it was cold, deadly cold! My blood was frozen, but the marble was colder still. Yet I could not speak.

'I felt them placing a ring on my wrist, attached to a cord, which was passed, as I afterwards learnt, through a hole in the wall to a little bell in the corridor on the other side. On both sides, close to the cord, a number was affixed. This was done to all the bodies laid there, so that if perchance any of "the dead" moved, the bell would ring, and warn the watchers outside that a living one lay within.

'Then they went away and left me among the dead.'

'Were you not frightened?' asked Mam'zelle.

'No. I was quite calm; I feared nothing. I prayed in my heart that God would keep and deliver me, and I felt sure He would; for my aunts had taught me to believe that He would answer prayer, and I had always prayed to Him from my childhood to keep me day by day. So I feared not; but I lay there cold and silent, as if I were really dead.

'So the hours went on. All was silent and still as death, save when at intervals I heard through the open door the measured tramp of the night guardian, as he paced the long corridor.

'Three or four hours had passed, when suddenly, in the dead stillness, I heard the tinkling of a bell.

Then the sound of hurried footsteps and muffled voices—an expression of surprise—a pause. Then more footsteps and voices; nearer and nearer they came, quite close to me. They bent over my neighbour. "Not dead! no, not dead."

'I opened my eyes. In the pale glimmer of the flickering lamp attached to the wall, I could distinguish through the loose sackcloth on my face the shadow of the doctor, who had been summoned, and of the two corpse-bearers, as they flitted between me and the great black crucifix at the end of the hall not far off. They had come to carry back to the living her they had laid among the dead. They quickly passed me by, but I could not move or speak. I half whispered a prayer to God—a low breathing. I could do no more. So the night stole on.

'Early in the morning the doctor and the students came to examine the bodies. All whose maladies were known, and who had not moved, were told off for burial; the others who had died without a known cause were kept for post-mortem examination. They came to me.

'"This one — what did she die of?" asked the doctor. "When was she brought here?"

'"She died in the night, sir; cause unknown," was the answer.

'He uncovered my face, and took my hand, and felt my heart. I sighed.

'"But she is not dead; she is living!" he cried. "Here, quick! quick! carry her back to bed, and get her warmed—quick!"

'So they carried me back as rapidly as they had brought me down, and laid me in my bed, and warmed and fed me.

'Ten months was I in the hospital. I came out able to work, but having contracted a heart-disease, that tells me I may any day be called away from this world to a better.'

'When did you come to Paris, Madame Morelle?'

'Well, Mam'zelle, I came in 1858, and in 1869 married my Peter, a brass-polisher, earning good wages in the brass-foundry near here, where he has been working for years under the same master. We had three little children; but my two last died during the siege, like so many other little ones, for want of proper food.

'My husband was, as you know, quite indifferent to God and to religion. He knew not the Lord and His goodness. He left me, however, to think and to act as my own conscience directed me. I had been brought up by my aunts to fear God, and I religiously kept the rules of my religion, and strove by uprightness in my daily life, and by careful observance of what I considered my religious duties, to win my right to heaven. Yet I felt in my inmost soul that more than this was needed. My sins, my failures, my shortcomings, often pressed on my conscience. I was restless and uneasy; I could not get the peace I longed for; and the *curé* was not a man to ask guidance from. Neither my husband nor I respected him, and he knew it.

'One Easter season—you know, Mam'zelle, how

imperative it is for Roman Catholics 'to do their Easter' (*faire leur pâques*). Whatever other religious duties they may have neglected during the year, Easter and its duties must be attended to; and you know what a lot of previous preparation is required in the way of church-going, fasting, and confession, at this season.

'Well, one day I went to confess to *monsieur le curé*. He was a bigoted Romanist and a rough man. He asked me if I had kept my fasts as prescribed by the Church. I told him truly I had not last Friday, as I had no food in the house but what was fat, and being poor, and my husband out of work, I could not waste it; neither had I any money to buy other.

'He sternly said, "I cannot give you absolution."

'Then I said, "Did God really order the poor to fast Friday and Saturday? Would the kind God condemn me for eating the only food I could get?"

'"The Church has so ordered," he replied. "You have been guilty of disobedience to the Church's commands. I shall not absolve you."

'"But if God Himself has not commanded it, why am I guilty because I have not kept men's rules?"

'I pleaded hard, but in vain, for absolution; for you know, Mam'zelle, that without "absolution" we are not allowed to take the sacrament on Easter Day, and we are taught that this means exclusion from the only means of salvation.

'"I have tasted a little fat," I cried, "and so I must die! No; God would not so punish me because I have transgressed rules made, you say, by men."

'Then a new thought flashed across my mind—"Who can forgive sins but God alone?" I had heard those words in the hall I had been going to lately.

'"If you will not give me absolution, father, I will do without it; but tell me, is it necessary for every one to confess and get absolution?"

'"Certainly," he said.

'"Then, tell me, to whom do you confess?"

'"To my superiors," he replied haughtily.

'"And your superiors, the bishops, to whom do they confess?"

'"To the pope, no doubt."

'"And the pope?"

'"To God," he answered sharply; "but——"

'"To God!" I cried, interrupting him. "The pope is but a man, a mortal, and God hears him, so I too will go to God, and 'do' my Easter before Him. He will have pity on a poor woman more than you have had, sir."

'"Why do you not call me 'father?'"' he said angrily.

'"No," I replied; "I will now go to another Father, who will not reject. I will come no more to you."

'I rose and went away; my heart was sore and swelling with indignation. Priests are not always

unkind, but many are rough to us poor people. This man was haughty and worldly, Mam'zelle. I knew him well.

'I went away to my home; I knelt down and confessed all my sins to God Himself, and prayed to Him who knew all about me and my circumstances, and asked His forgiveness. I said, "Lord, Thou canst come and make my soul fit for Thee to dwell in, though I can't go to church and take the wafer;" and then I felt so happy to think I had been direct to God Himself, and told Him all. So I kept my Easter in my own room, and sat down and read a good book; and it was the happiest Easter I ever had.

'My light was dim, but I hoped in my Saviour. Now I know He has loved me and saved me by His finished work on the cross for me.

'It was about five years ago that I first found my way into one of your mission halls at St. Antoine. I shall not forget it. How fresh and good was the truth I heard! I went continually there, and to your mothers' meetings at Ménilmontant. The clouds and difficulties by degrees passed away, and left me in the sunshine. Yes, it was like the sunshine breaking into my soul, when I grasped the truth that Jesus had saved me.

'I have learnt that I can always go to my Father through the Lord Jesus for all I need, and no man has any right to interfere between us.

'Three years ago I joined the Protestant Church

near here. Oh, how happy I am! All is right—all is forgiven. And when the Lord calls me, I shall not be afraid to die; and with my babes and my "partridge," I shall sing His praise and power for ever.'

CHAPTER IV.

CORPORAL SIMON.

'Oh, what a joyful time it will be when the Prince of Peace reigns over the bloodstained earth, and there shall be war no longer!

'See, madame, I have found it all written here in the Prophet Isaiah, how our Jesus is to be "Prince of Peace." And look here again, madame; I have been hunting it up all over this wonderful book. It tells us the time will come when men shall "beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks . . . Neither shall they learn war any more." See, here it is!' and the old soldier eagerly turned over the pages of his loved Bible, and laid his finger on the passage in Isaiah ii., marked with a little bit of folded paper. Whenever he wanted anything explained to him at our next meeting, or wished us to enjoy with him some newly discovered truth, he carefully marked the page with a bit of paper; and so many were the little bits of paper placed in his Bible, showing how diligently he had studied it since last we met, that they formed quite a thick white fringe on the top of his book.

'You who have been a soldier, Corporal Simon,' we said, 'must know better than we civilians all the horrors of war.'

'Ah, madame! I have fought in Algiers; I have fought in Italy; I have fought in the Crimea; but to see war in one's own country surpasses all. It rends one's heart.'

'You were at the siege of Metz in '70, your wife told me.'

'Yes, madame; I am an Alsatian, and was born at Metz. After the war, as the choice was given me, I elected to be a Frenchman, and came to Paris with my wife. She is also from Metz, as you can see by her black apron and close-fitting black cap. I was serving, during the siege, with my regiment in the garrison of Metz, which was mostly, however, composed of National Guards.

'How I loved Metz, the beautiful city! How I loved, as a boy, to wander into the fertile fields around, and dance with my little sister on the banks of the blue Moselle! How I enjoyed a climb to the top of the lofty cathedral tower, to look out far away over the beautiful vine-clad hills beyond! And oftentimes of an evening, weary with play, I would sit down with my playfellows on the green ramparts, and listen to the booming of the big bell—"The Mute" they called her. Alas! alas! I shall never hear her more!

'The last time I saw my native country, how changed it was! The cruel war had consumed its beauty. Smoking villages, deserted cottages, blood-

soaked fields, where I remembered fertility and plenty, peace and comfort. But the worst was the shame! oh, the shame of that day! Think, madame, 170,000 Frenchmen made to lay down their arms and surrender their colours at the command of Bazaine!

'Hungry truly we were. There was but little bread, little water, and no salt in the city; and epidemic and death raged everywhere. But we could still have fought and won, had they but led us on to break through the enemy's lines; for we were Frenchmen and patriots, and we felt strong to defend our country. But we were ordered to pile our arms, and, after resisting for some time the grievous order, at last, weeping, we obeyed. But, madame,' said the old soldier, as he wiped away a tear with his coat-sleeve, and drew himself proudly up—'madame, we were not beaten; we were betrayed!'

'Betrayal' or 'defeat,' which? History has not yet decided the point, and perhaps never will. But it is the universal belief of the French army and nation that 'betrayal' was the truth; and many an indignant tear of honest shame has fallen at the recollections of that day.

'Ah!' continued the old corporal, 'I knew not God in those days. I knew not what He had reserved for me. I would have liked to have died there that very day. All night, in the soaking rain, we stood by hundreds and thousands, without shelter or food, strictly guarded, waiting our turn to be sent off as prisoners to Germany. I was sent to Coblenz.

'My wife followed me, and after some time was able, by washing for the French officers, to add something to my poor fare as a captive. My little girl had died at Metz during the siege. Weakened by want of food, the fright produced by the incessant cannonading killed her.'

'She was our only one, madame,' added the wife with trembling lips; 'our last of four.'

'After the war was over,' resumed the corporal, 'I was sent back to France, weary, heart-broken, and sick through the deprivations I had endured, longing for a comforter, and finding none. I sought peace and solace in the Catholic Church and its services and ceremonies, for my soul was in trouble. "Was it not for my sins, and for the sins of my country, that God had so forsaken us?" I said to myself; but I found no peace till I found it in Jesus.'

'What brought you to the hall in the Rue de la C——?'

'Well, I had an old friend, a shoemaker, a fellow-prisoner in '70, in Germany. I went to see him one day, and he said, "How wretched thou dost look, Eugène!"

'"Wretched I am, my friend," I replied. "I seek and cannot find comfort. My spirit is troubled, and I know not where to go to find rest."

'Now, my friend was a thoughtless man, and believed in nothing; but he was a kind fellow, and he said to me—

'"Look here, Eugène, there are some people lately come into this street, where they have a hall, and

they speak of the good God, and of religion ; and all is free. Thou canst not do better than go there. They are kind people, and the orators talk like angels, they tell me. Anyhow, it cannot harm thee to go ; and it may calm thee."

'So we went, my wife and I. Oh, it was divine ! It was the truth, the real truth, we heard. I felt it was. The words commended themselves to my conscience, and spoke to my understanding and to my heart as never words had spoken before. After that we never missed a meeting. We could not do without the blessed Book and the beautiful hymns ; and it was all so simple, a little child could understand. And then, madame, you came and read and talked to us, and explained more fully the words we had heard.

'I see it all, "justification unto life," through Jesus Christ the Lord, without any works of mine. It is grand !

'Cannot you stay a bit with us, and let us read a little in the big Book ?'

And so, preparing himself for a good dig into the mines of truth by taking off his coat, as if on fatigue duty, hanging it up on a peg behind the door, and turning up his shirt-sleeves, the corporal sat down to his work in right earnest.

Honest old soul ! He did not seek the knowledge of God in a lazy, careless fashion ; but sought the Lord with all his heart, studying with all his might, and rejoicing with his whole soul over every new discovery of God's truth, as one who 'had found

great spoil.' Having leisure now, his simple wants being provided for by the little pension he enjoyed, he spent hours in the study of the Word, carefully marking with his little bits of paper for 'further consideration' and explanation anything that particularly struck him, always claiming our sympathy in his joy when we met again.

'Look, madame,' he would say—'look here! and here! and here! See what wonderful things I have found! Did you know—but I suppose you did—how the prophets talked of Him? It must be of *Him*, for it agrees with the Gospels. How many years did you say, madame, that Isaiah wrote before Him? Wonderful! wonderful!'

And so we talked and prayed, and then carefully wrapping up in a clean cloth his 'treasure,' as he called his Bible, he put it away in the corner of his drawer. There one day I saw lying his crucifix, his holy-water stoup, the image of the Virgin, and other relics of superstition.

'Yes,' he said, 'I have taken them down. I looked into my treasure to see what it said about them, and as I did not find them mentioned as necessary to our faith, I put them away. I have not yet decided what to do with them. But God will tell me.' He was waiting for more light. 'Whatever I find here,' laying his hand on his Bible, 'I shall do.'

'It is written,' was one of his favourite expressions.

'See, madame,' said he one day, 'this is my "Regulation Book." Here are my orders. What I

find here,' laying his hand firmly on his Bible—'what I find here I accept, and what I do not find here,' with a decisive wave of the hand, 'I reject.'

One day, after our greeting was over, he said, 'Madame, I have a surprise for you. I think you will be pleased.'

'Well, what is it? Some good find, no doubt.'

'True, madame, this is new. I have learned two prayers.'

And standing up before us with his hands folded behind him, like a child at school, the old corporal repeated, not in Latin, but in his own native tongue, the Apostles' Creed and the Lord's Prayer. When he came to the last sentence, 'Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory,' he burst into tears.

'Oh, it is too magnificent! too magnificent!' he sobbed. 'My God, Thou art so mighty, and yet Thou carest for me!'

'Yes,' we added; 'can you not say, "He loved me, and gave Himself for me"?'

'Oh yes! what joy! Yet many think Him to be a hard Man and an enemy. I thought so myself once. Men always think hardly of God when they do not know Him. That is it, madame. It is just like the story Pastor H—— told us the other day in the hall.'

'Tell us the story; we should like to hear it.'

CHAPTER V.

AN EPISODE OF THE YEAR '70.

'WELL, madame, in the days of the "terrible war," in the year '70, Pastor H——, like most of the Protestant pastors, gave himself to the ambulance work, and followed the army, to succour the wounded and comfort the dying; and this is what he told us:

'"On November 30 we had notice that a great battle was being fought outside Paris, near Champigny and Brie, on the banks of the Marne, General Ducrot having crossed the river with 60,000 men. We started with our ambulance waggons from the Place de l'Etoile, or the Arc de Triomphe, and, passing through the Place de la Concorde, and along the quays, we went out at the Porte de Vincennes, then through the wood to Villars le Sec and Joinville le Pont, where we crossed the Marne at nightfall.

'"It was bitterly cold. The ground was hard frozen, and the moon clear and bright. Fighting had been going on since the morning. A desperate effort had been made that day by our beleaguered garrison under General Ducrot, and thousands of our poor fellows had fallen around the burning villages,

in the coppices and brushwood about Champigny, Brie, and Villars, and on the banks of the blood-stained Marne.

'"At six o'clock the weary combatants ceased fighting. It was a drawn battle. We shouldered our litters, and began to seek for our wounded and dying soldiers. Silently we marched through the down-trodden vineyards, passing many scattered corpses as we went, till we crossed the enemy's lines.

'"Sending out a flag with the Red Cross of St. John, we were allowed to search unmolested for our wounded men. Yet, though fighting had ceased, desultory firing was indulged in on both sides, and bullets fell pretty thickly around us at times. No other sound was heard but the crackling of the brushwood under our steady tread; no other motion but the shivering of the leafless branches in the keen night wind. Not a cry nor a groan, though the bodies lay thick on the heights of Villars and Champigny, in the vineyards, under the hedges, in the woods, and on the slopes of the hill. Not a cry, nor a groan. No appeal for help gladdened our ears.

'"By the glinting rays of the cold moon we stooped down and looked closer at the bodies. None stirred. All lay stiff and motionless; so we passed on. 'All dead! all dead!' we sorrowfully muttered.

'"'But are there no wounded, no living to succour?' whispered a comrade. 'It is strange. Surely

we must be mistaken. There must be some wounded among all these fallen men.'

'"Then it flashed across me that perchance these countrymen of ours, hearing our heavy tramp, had taken us for the enemy, and were simulating death, hiding their wounds and repressing their groans as we passed. Quickly I stooped down over a number of soldiers who had fallen close together.

'"'Brothers, are there any wounded here? Fear not; we are Frenchmen. It is a friend who speaks.'

'"Then at that word 'friend' there arose all around us moans and groans and cries. 'Water! water! Help! help!' It was pitiful to hear.

'"But oh, how glad we were that our coming, our search, and our words had not been in vain! For we were able to carry away man after man in our litters to our waggons, and so brought our loved and our wounded ones home to Paris, to be tended and healed and saved.

'"Oh, my friends," the pastor said, in the hall, "the world is full of sick and wounded and dying souls, whom the Lord Jesus came to save; but they perish in their silent, despairing misery, because, when in sorrow or affliction God passes by, they take Him to be their enemy, and hide their sins and wounds and need in sullen silence from Him, in fear and hate. They do not know and believe that Jesus is their Friend, the sinners' Friend, and therefore they crave no help of the only One who can heal and save their dying souls. Yet the loving Saviour is come down into the battle-field of the dying, 'to seek and to

save,' and He who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, and by whose stripes we are healed, can alone avail us in our desperate condition. He comes, the Healer and the Helper, and he who hears His voice and responds, shall live. Death has passed away, and life is come, to whosoever listens and yields himself to Him."

'I remember it all, madame, and thanked God as I went home that night that the Lord had made me hear His voice, and made me trust in Him, so that I no longer mistook the step of a Friend for the tread of a foe.'

Dear old man! Daily he grew 'in grace, and in the knowledge of his God and Saviour Jesus Christ.' Six months before his death he had joined the Protestant Church of the quarter, and was looking eagerly forward to a great event in his life—his first admission to the Lord's Supper. He thought of it, dreamt of it, talked of it, for a long time before.

The preceding Saturday he said to us, 'Sister, to-morrow is the great day. To-morrow I shall take my place at the Lord's table as one of His friends. Will you be there, my sister, at our family feast?'

Not long after he was struck down by sickness, and taken to the hospital. With difficulty we found out his hospital ward and his number.

'Show us No. 10,' we said to the attendant.

He took us to the bed, but a stranger was lying there.

'This is not our friend!' we exclaimed; 'and yet

this ward and the number are correct. What has become of Corporal Simon?'

Then another of the attendants came forward, a young man.

'You are inquiring for the dear old soldier,' he said—'that man of faith who used to talk to us about God? I am Monsieur Jean, his friend, madame; for he made a friend of me, and often read to me out of his book. Madame, he is gone! He died a few days ago, and he is to be buried to-day. See! look out here!' and through the open window he pointed to the courtyard, where a number of people were assembled for the funeral.

'They are waiting,' he said, 'for the guard of honour, for he was an Alsatian and a *décoré*. He had received several medals for valour on the field.'

We went down and fell into the ranks just starting, composed of Alsatians, men and women, anxious to do honour to the last remains of their fellow-countryman.

And so we slowly wended our way to 'The Turnip-field,' as the cemetery of Ivry is called by the people; and there Corporal Simon sleeps in peace, till he awakes to greet his Lord and Saviour at the resurrection of the just.

CHAPTER VI.

ANGÈLE DUVAL.

It was a glorious Thursday in April. Spring, long expected, had come at last. Nature had really waked up from her winter sleep, and life was in the air. Every hour, in square, garden, and avenue, the trees were putting on brighter and brighter shades of ever-pleasing green. Birds were busy chirping, chattering, and selecting 'desirable' situations on the sunniest boughs for the building of their tiny nests. Children were romping and dancing in the little public gardens, found in all parts of Paris, and the benches were lined with nurses with their babies, while old men and women were basking anywhere and everywhere in the genial warmth of the glowing sun; for it was a lovely day, fresh and clear, yet warm and spicy.

A little girl about eleven years of age was hastening along the Boulevard de B—— as fast as a big basket she had on her arm would allow her little legs to carry her. Though small for her age, she was a very pretty child, with large blue eyes, pencilled eyebrows, and long fair curls. Exercise had given a rosy flush

to the usually pale cheeks. The expression of her face was sweet and loving; but there was a firmness about the little mouth that almost contradicted the merry twinkle of the laughing eyes, and the business air that characterized all her agile movements struck one much in so young a child. But little Angèle had been acquainted from her earliest years with many of the sorrows and difficulties that beset those who have to struggle for a living in the great city. Her clean print frock was partly covered with a bright red pinafore, while her sunny little face peeped out of a dark blue hood, with white tassels, carefully crossed over her chest. Evidently a mother's hand had wrapped it round her. Her way home lay across the little public garden of the quarter.

'Come, Angèle, come and play—come along!' cried a little lad, Louis Leprince, from the garden, as he caught sight of the new-comer wistfully glancing at the romping children.

Angèle shook her head, and, turning down a narrow street, was soon up on the sixth story of one of the high houses. She knocked at a door, which was speedily opened to her.

'Here I am, mother dear! Thou wilt find all thou needest in my basket. Oh, but the market was crowded to-day! See, Madame Clibottier gave me a biscuit, and old Monsieur Cointe an orange. When I have had my soup, I want to go and play with Louis and Annette and little "Red Stockings." Oh, mamma, such lots of children are out to-day in the garden! You know, it is Thursday;

that is why. But I must help thee first with the soup.'

So Angèle sat down and pared and cut up the onions, carrots, and cabbage, tied up the bit of meat, and soon all was boiling in the pot on the fire.

'Now, mother, I can help you to sew the buttons and rings on those umbrellas if you like, while I tell you all I heard at the market.'

Madame Duval's careworn face lighted up, as it always did when Angèle was prattling to her; for she was the darling of her heart, her only solace upon earth.

The hour passed quickly by while their *déjeuner* was preparing.

'Now, mother, I must go out to play, or it will be school-time at the hall. I have finished my soup. I have learned my verses and looked over the lesson for to-day. I have been to the school five times without missing, so I shall bring you back a lovely picture.' And away went the little maiden to join her companions under the chestnut trees.

'Here is Angèle! You will dance with us, won't you, Angèle? We are making the ring!' cried the children. And soon the merry ring was turning round and round, the happy little voices singing a nursery rhyme—

Il était une bergère qui gardait ses moutons.
Rond, rond, petit pat-à-pon!

'"Papillon," you ought to say. I like that better,' said Angèle.

'All right.

Elle faisait du fromage, du lait de ses moutons.
Rond, rond, petit papillon!'

And round and round went the children in the giddy circle.

The little cripple on the bench watched with wistful eyes the quick, free movements of the children's feet, and strove to catch snatches of their song, as the broken words mingled with their merry laughter.

Elle avait un châton,
Rond, rond, petit papillon!

Si y tu mets la patte,
Tu auras du bâton!
Le chat y mis sa patte.
Rond, rond, petit papillon!

Faster and faster went the little feet.

Partie à confesse chez le vieux père Grognon,
Mon père, Je m'accuse d'avoir tué mon châton!
Rond, rond——!

'There, there! little Red Stockings is down.'

'Red Stockings,' a little six-year-old, either disturbed in his mind by the vision of Father Grumpy, or by the tragic end of the kitten, had been paying no attention to his footing, and had been carried off his legs in the rapid whirl. He was soon picked up again, and after having been well shaken and patted down, was pronounced to be quite clean and uninjured.

'Listen, listen!' cried Angèle, as the great clock of the church tower began to strike; 'listen! Six

strokes!—a quarter to two. We must be going to the hall.'

And away scampered the children to fetch from their homes their little Testaments and their reward tickets. The little cripple sat still on the bench.

'Art thou coming with us, Pauline? Come, give me thy hand; I will carry thy bag.' And the two little friends moved off together.

'Poor little thing!' exclaimed a woman who had been sitting by her. 'How thin she is! and she has no strength scarcely. See with what difficulty she drags herself along with her crutch.'

'A child of the siege, madame, I should say,' remarked her neighbour, 'like little Angèle. Ah! she too is a delicate child, born, you know, in "the terrible year." The children born that year in Paris will never be strong. I myself lost a little girl of 1871. Madame Duval was a neighbour of mine near the Croix Rouge at the time of the great fire after the siege. My little Joséphine and Madame Duval's Angèle were born in the previous November. What a trouble we had to keep them alive all those sad months! The children died like flies. No wonder! we could not feed them on rats, cats, or dogs; and even they were difficult enough to get. Madame Duval and I bought half a rabbit between us one day, and that cost us twelve francs and a half' (ten shillings). 'Meat, you know, was up to seventeen francs a pound before the end, and horrible stuff too. I refused my ration one morning; but a gentleman gravely said, "Take it, madame; I advise

you. To-morrow there will be nothing." So I took it. We women used to sit or stand in line on the snowy pavements for hours, waiting for the butchers' and bakers' shops to open in the morning. The last ration I got for my family of six was two horse's ears! I made my last drop of soup with them. As to the bread, I have a piece of it still nailed to my wall, and it is not mouldy yet, and never will be; for it has been there these ten years already.'

'How did you keep the children alive, madame?' asked her friend.

'Well, I had saved up all the crusts of bread I could get before the siege, and baked them quite hard in the oven. Then I put them away in a sack till all the eatable bread was gone, and when no more milk was to be had, I soaked them in coffee or claret, of which there was plenty. I tried frying them in oil—the coarse lamp-oil that we got, but the smell was so bad that when the cooking was going on we all retired into the garden. The children would not eat it so.'

'Want of fuel must have been, I think, the worst to bear,' said the country friend.

'Oh, 'twas terrible! The thermometer was twenty-eight degrees below freezing, and no wood or fuel left; all the great wood yards were emptied two days after the siege had begun. It was marvellous where the wood went to. People had to cut up their furniture for fuel. How intense the cold was! It was the hardest winter we had had for many, many

years, and we did suffer. I have never been warm since. I am always chilly now.

'Food in plenty came in after the siege was ended. The kind English people had sent over two million francs' worth (£80,000), and it came pouring into Paris. How thankful we were to get it!

'Then the insurrection and the great fire broke out. Oh, if you had been at the Croix Rouge on May 21!

'We suddenly saw a great glare in the sky, and we went up on the roof of the house to see what it could mean. All the quarter we were in was on fire. We saw the roof of the Tuileries Palace fall in. The Council of State, the Treasury, the Hôtel de Ville, all were blazing, as also all the Rue de Lille and the Rue de Bac.

'Volumes of flames rose everywhere. It made our hearts sick. We could not see the sun for two days, for the dense smoke hung over the city like a dark curtain.

'We snatched up our little ones and rushed out. The populace were sacking the houses near; the bombs were flying round us; and women were firing from the windows on the soldiers. We ran and took refuge some way off, with a cousin of mine, in the Street of the Four Winds, and hid in a cellar, for vengeance, bloodshed, and violence reigned everywhere. The children were terrified; they were so weak and sickly. But there, you know how delicate "the children of the siege" are. You will see them for the most part pallid, thin, and stunted. There is

no strength in them; a few will reach twenty. I doubt whether Pauline or Angèle will. Like hundreds of others, they will all their days feel the weakening effect of those days of misery.'

'What a comfort to her mother that little Angèle seems to be!' said the listener.

'Yes, indeed. Madame Duval has many troubles. Her son Charles turned out so badly, you know, and she has but little to live on; and since Monsieur Duval was killed in the siege by a bomb, she seems rather strange at times. But here come the children; the school must be over.'

'Is it over?' asked Madame Guyot of the little ones, as, chattering, gesticulating, and clapping their hands, they passed before her in excited groups. 'But whatever is the matter?'

'Oh, we are to have a fête, a beautiful fête in the woods!' cried a dozen voices together.

'We are going down the river in boats,' shouted a boy—'in boats all the way to St. Cloud! What a lot of boats we shall want! The gentleman says there will be twelve hundred of us going.'

'Twelve hundred! Why, where will they all come from? and how will they eat?' cried the astonished women.

'I must go and tell mother,' said Angèle. 'Quick! quick!'

'A fête, mother! a fête!' cried Angèle, as she sprang into her mother's room—'a fête, all in boats, down the river! All the children in Paris will be there! But you are sad, mother. What is it? A

letter from Charles?' The little girl's countenance fell. 'Oh, Charles! Is he naughty again?'

Tears were falling from the mother's eyes. Yes, Charles was in prison.

'He wants more money when he leaves, he says, and I have none to send him.'

'Mother, we must pray for Charles. To-day at school the gentleman told us how a young man had gone far away from home, and been very wicked. One day, when he was very miserable, he found his way into a hall like ours. He liked the sweet hymns, and stayed on to listen to the speaker; and when he heard how God could save and pardon sinners, he cried, and told the gentleman he was a sinner, and wanted pardon. So God changed his heart and forgave him, and he came back to his mother again, like the prodigal son we read about. So Charles will come back, mother, if we ask God to change his heart; and Pauline and I will pray for him. And look, mother—I forgot. Just look at this beautiful Bible! Is it not a big one? It is thine and mine, mother; we earned it for one hundred reward tickets, you know. It is mine and thine together, for attendances at the hall. Are you not glad, little mother, we have got it at last, after so long a time?

'See, I will put it here in the corner of the shelf under the table, and we shall always know where to find it; so when you are sad we will read in it, mother, because the words of Jesus comfort the heart, do they not, mother?' And Angèle caressed her mother's worn face with her little hands.

Madame Duval wiped her tears, and grew more cheerful under the influence of her darling's love.

'What have you got besides, Angèle, at the school? Were there many children there?'

'Oh, lots, mother—nearly a hundred; but some were so naughty! The gentleman had to put some boys out. They wanted to put squibs on the sly under the lady's chair, to make her jump, they said. But after they were put out everybody was quiet, and the gentleman told us about the Good Shepherd, and gave us our verse for next time. The lady marked it for me: "I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep." That is it. Then we sung—

Bon Berger, ami fidèle,
Gardes nous par ton amour;[1]

and a new *cantique*, more difficult; but Pauline, Eulalie, and Perrine, and some other children, are going with me to-morrow to old Father Le Marchant—you know, mother, the sick gentleman who used to teach singing. He likes us to come round his bed, and he tells us how to sing the new hymns now he cannot come to the meetings. Oh, mother, mother, the fête, the fete! How happy I am!' and Angèle danced and skipped about the room, clapping her hands the while.

Having given vent to her joy, she sat down on a little stool at her mother's feet, and began to tell her

[1] Good Shepherd, faithful Friend,
Keep us by Thy love.

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all she had seen and thought of while at the children's meeting.

'Mother, what funny names some people have! When the gentleman made the roll-call to-day, he cried out, "Jeanne Huguenot," and a little girl of twelve answered him; and then there was a new boy called Louis Coste, a nice little boy, very quiet and attentive; but was it not a funny name—Huguenot?'

'Probably, my dear, Jeanne Huguenot is the descendant of some little Protestant boy carried off in the days of King Louis XIV., to be educated in a Catholic convent or monastery. The Protestants were called Huguenots in those days, and the name must have been given him for want of a family name; for very young children were kidnapped, and brought up as Catholics. My mother was a Protestant, and often talked to me of her ancestors who suffered for their religion. Coste, by-the-by, is quite a Huguenot name—a martyr's name.

'I remember, when we were living in Normandy, how the friends at Caen showed us in their old houses, in the walls and in the chimneys sometimes, the marks of holes covered over with pans and garments, through which, when the king's dragoons came to take away the children from their parents, they passed the poor little ones from house to house. Kind Catholic neighbours, who did not approve of children being taken from their parents, used to help them to save them, and hid them away till they could get them to the quay and on board one of the English or Dutch merchantmen in port; but many

were seized while at play, or on their way to school. My mother had a grand-aunt who was carried off when a child of five years, while playing outside her father's door, and she was given to the nuns to be brought up a Catholic.

'It was said by those who knew, that unless a child was carried off when quite young, they could never get it to turn, so well taught were they. Children of ten or twelve were rarely known to change their religion, but preferred persecution to the end, unless they escaped.

'My mother married a Catholic, and I was brought up one; but I like the Protestant religion. It is good —very good and simple; and the Bible is put into the hands of the people, so that they can read it for themselves, which I approve of.'

'Mother, we have our own Bible now. It shall be our morning and evening friend, shall it not? I do not care to read any book as well as the gospel of Jesus Christ.'

So the days passed on, Angèle learning more and more of the love of God as her Father in Jesus Christ, she and Pauline praying daily for mother and Charles.

At last the fête day arrived. A beautiful summer day it was. Angèle, Pauline, Jeanne Huguenot, Louis Coste, Red Stockings, and all the school were there, with hundreds of other children from all quarters of Paris—twenty-five schools in all. Each school, with its banner flying, marched down to the nearest little river-side wharf; some swarmed on

board the Flies ; some took wing with the Swallows ; others stormed the Stars[1]—two hundred and fifty in each little steamer ; and then twelve hundred fresh young voices rang out their song of praise, as they sped down the river through the very heart of Paris. How sweet the music sounded! How the notes seemed to linger on the waters ere they softly died away!

'Who are these ? and whence came they?' 'What means this youthful invasion of the river?' 'What means the songs they sing?' were the constant queries of the amazed hearers, as they passed along on the banks and quays or on the steamers running up and down the stream.

The few who knew answered, 'These are they who come, hundreds of them, from the lowest courts and alleys of Paris, who, till they were gathered into these schools, had only heard of the holy loving God as a hateful tyrant, to be defied and mocked. While others, of a better type, have been won by the pure light of gospel truth, and have been drawn out of ignorance and superstition, sent by their parents, who attend the evening meetings at the halls, and are desirous their little ones should be enlightened as they themselves have been.' Children of many classes, quarters, and circumstances are there ; but all these little souls are precious in God's sight, and in the sight of His servants, who diligently, week by

[1] The three steamer companies of *Les Mouches*, *Les Hirondelles*, and *Les Etoiles* are now called the *Bateaux Parisiennes*, the Paris Boat Company.

week, seek to instil into them the purest gospel truths.

In a couple of hours from the start the little fleet anchored at St. Cloud, and a joyous day was spent beneath the clear blue sky. The happy children rambled at will over the ruined palace, or raced up and down the sunny slopes, to the music of the great fountains and cascades. Then, after a hearty lunch of bread and cheese and cherries, washed down with copious draughts of water, they gathered under the grand old forest trees to join in a short and simple thanksgiving service ere they shipped for their return voyage. One more outburst of praise, rising like incense to the skies, and the little fleet steamed rapidly down the river.

'Who are these, and whence came they?' We have answered that question, but propose a few others. 'Whither are they going? What road in life will they take? Where will they be found in time and in eternity?' The future alone will fully answer these queries; but Hope and Faith even now reply, 'The Word of God cannot return to Him void.' Is not this a manifestation of the coming race—a godlier race? Do we not see here the dawn of a better day for France? These little scholars, are they not the corn-seed of a rich harvest in the heavens?

Angèle sped home that evening with joyful heart, to tell her mother the news of the day, and give her the fullest details of its proceedings; for it cheered Madame Duval to listen to her little daughter's voice. Indeed, the child was a great favourite with all who

knew her. The gospel picture-cards and leaflets she won at school were freely distributed among her neighbours, and if any one was ill, Angèle's delight was to sing them the sweet hymns she had learned in the hall, at the children's meetings and at the large evening meetings where she accompanied her mother.

The little girl had quietly, but firmly, grasped the truth of a perfect and free salvation. She delighted in talking to others of her Saviour, and many she led to the meetings in the hall, where His love was the great theme.

Her dear friend Pauline had been stricken down with consumption. Angèle loved to visit and read and sing to her ; for Pauline's heart too had opened slowly, but gratefully, to the fact that the Lord loved her, though 'only a poor little dwarfed cripple.'

How gladly she received the visits of the doctor from the free dispensary attached to the hall! How pleased when—most strange to say—he actually prayed with her at her bedside! Who had ever seen a doctor do such a thing before? It was a real wonder. All the friends and neighbours talked of this new thing as most queer, but they were touched in their hearts, and approved of the idea. So opposition and dislike to the ways and 'religion' of *La Société*, as they called the Mission, died away, and many were drawn to the hall.

In the autumn Pauline grew rapidly worse. Evidently the end was near.

'I fear nothing,' she said, on her last day. 'I see not Jesus, but His presence is with me. Pray for

me, sing with me, once again, and then I must depart to be with Him.'

And the friends who like her loved Jesus, and were standing by her bed, sung in the low twilight the resurrection hymn.[1]

Nous mourrons, mais pour renaître ;
La mort n'est qu'un doux sommeil,
Bientôt Jésus va paraître ;
Ce sera le grand réveil!

The strain died away. Angèle bent down over her friend's face. 'Pauline, dearest!'

No answer—all was still; but Angèle thought, as she listened, that she heard far, far away, heavenward, the first glad notes of Pauline's eternal hymn of praise.

[1] French imitation of 'Yes, we part, but not for ever.'

CHAPTER VII.

DANCING WITH THE ANGELS.

'DEAR mother, I am tired, but I would like to go with thee to-night to carry back those umbrellas you have mended—just over the bridge, you know. I like to look at the lights.'

'Very well, my dear, you shall come with me.' And Madame Duval and Angèle set out.

It was a beautiful clear, starry night in autumn. Angèle and her mother walked slowly on, till they found themselves on the bridge of La Concorde.

'Stop, mamma,' said Angèle; 'I want to look. How beautiful it is! Like fairyland! Look at the lights—red, green, white—dancing about on the Place like fireflies!'

'Those are the cabs, child. You see only their coloured lights in the gloom.'

'Yes, but look, mamma, at the starry bridges over the river, and the long avenues of stars, and the tower and battlements of the Trocadero, all spangled with stars! How lovely! And see, mother, how the little steamers, with their tiny sparkling eyes, green and red and orange, are frisking to and fro on the

dark river! I could watch them for ever. But, mother, why do you not answer me?'

Madame Duval was absorbed in moody thought.

'If I were to lose her,' she muttered to herself, and she looked down intently into the dark flowing river below, 'could I—live?'

'Mother,' cried Angèle, quickly, 'you must not look down there. Look up to the beautiful stars and to the great blue heavens, where we shall be one day, you and I.'

Madame Duval grasped tightly the little hand that was pushed into hers, and they walked on together, mother and child. But which was the child, and which was the mother?

The errand was soon done, and again, but hurriedly, they crossed the bridge.

'I am tired, mother, very tired,' said Angèle, when she reached home.

The mother's anxious face grew sadder. Angèle had been gradually fading after a cold caught, no one knew how, and Madame Duval, who had lost other children, knew the symptoms that would rob her finally of her last treasure. And then—what then? Trouble had dazed her intellect, and her faith was weak. 'If Angèle, her guardian angel, left her—what then?' The poor woman grew bewildered.

Angèle, with her quick perception, had noticed the increasing gloom on her mother's face, and often 'spoke to God about it.' The home had been changed, and the mission hall of the quarter was now too far off for them to get to it. Winter was

coming on, and Angèle was growing worse. She could no longer get up out of her little bed. Madame Duval was growing increasingly sad and restless, though now she was never away from her darling for an instant longer than she could help; but food must be earned for both.

One evening, after Madame Duval had returned from her errands, Angèle called her. Her voice was very low and feeble. 'Mother dear, I want you to come and talk to me.'

In a moment the mother was at her bedside, stooping over her.

'Mother dear,' the voice said, 'I am going home, as thou knowest—home to my true home.

La haut, la haut, est ma patrie.[1]

And I cannot take care of thee any longer; but God will, if thou askest Him. Do not cry about me, dear mother, for I shall be so happy up there. I shall never be in want of playfellows up there. Thou knowest since we left our last home I have had no companions, no one to dance with but thee, mother, and of late thou wouldest not dance with me often. I love dancing. And up there I shall have lots of angels to dance with; and Pauline will be able to dance with me now up there. Am I not going to be close to the Good Shepherd who loves me? so do not grieve, mother. But, mother, I am anxious about thee. I want thee to be with me in heaven. Mother dear, if thou art to go to heaven, thou must not do

[1] To heaven, my native land.

any naughty thing when I am gone. So I want thee to make me a promise. I will tell it thee in thine ear;' and, drawing down her mother's face to her mouth, Angèle whispered something in her ear. 'It is a promise between us—between thee and me, mother. It is sacred. It is my last request. Thou wilt not forget it when thou art tempted, will you, mother? It is a promise.'

The mother's broken, trembling voice replied, 'I will, I will, my angel; I promise thee I will.'

'You know where our Bible is, mother. You know I *always* keep it there on the table shelf. And now, mother, when you are sad, remember how happy I am, dancing with the angels!'

Snow was lying deep on the ground when little Angèle fell asleep. The poor mother, bereft of her child, shut her doors to all, and silently plodded along her weary way. Necessity alone sent her out from time to time, by day, to get work to do at home. At night her greatest pleasure was to attend the *Salle Evangélique*, as the hall was called, some distance off, where she got strength and consolation from the words she heard, sometimes joining with trembling voice in the hymns she remembered her dear one had so loved.

And thus the time went on. Few knew or noticed the solitary stranger who slipped out so silently when the meeting was over, declining all friendly overtures, except the greetings of the lady at the door.

CHAPTER VIII.

A COURT IN OLD PARIS.

SUMMER is come. The winter is over and gone. The winter with its many trials to the poor, with its numberless opportunities for unremitted labour on the part of the Master's servants, with its fruitfulness and songs of praise; for winter is the great season for winning souls. Halls are full, mothers' meetings crowded, schools overflow in many quarters, and facilities for visiting the poor and sick are greater than in summer, when every one is at work or out-of-doors. Winter is past, summer is ended, and many have been saved. The provinces, as well as Paris, have many tales to tell of men, women, and children won for the Lord, and rejoicing in His hitherto unknown love. But still as ever, in summer as in winter, the work goes on.

It was a sultry afternoon in July. Up and down many a narrow crooked street in 'old Paris,' up long flights of stairs, 'Mademoiselle Marcelline,' as the people called her, had been tramping since mid-day, in the hope of finding some of her many friends, young and old, at home in their little rooms on the

sixth floor; but it was in vain. Every door she tried was locked; every one was out, at work, school, or play. Some were at the Government tobacco factory in that quarter; some were 'charing;' some—the children, of course—were in the playground belonging to the sisters, or sitting under the plane trees on the boulevard further on. But some, she thought, might be found at the *lavoir*, or public washhouse, in the Rue de la Lune.

In a few minutes Mademoiselle Marcelline found herself thankfully reposing on an upturned bucket in the *lavoir*, set for her by some friendly hand. How grateful the cool shade of the large airy building after the glare and heat of the close streets! How refreshing to her feet the damp floor of the washhouse after the scorching pavement outside! How pleasant the splash of the water in the tanks! How musical the rhythmic clapping of the little wooden spades the women used to beat their wet clothes with!

Mademoiselle Marcelline sat on her bucket and looked around on the busy, chattering, laughing throng to see if any 'lady' she was in quest of—all are 'ladies' now in France, having been levelled up under the last republic—was in the *lavoir*. As she scanned the busy rows of women standing at their washing-boards, a friend caught sight of her.

'Why, Mademoiselle Marcelline, are you come to learn to wash?' she cried. 'Look! I will show you how we do it in Paris. See here!' and, after wetting and soaping her sheet, down came the little spade, 'Clap! clap! claypotty clap!' as she turned and

twirled and twisted her linen about, singing gaily as she beat a snatch of some song, that sounded like a French version of—

> This is the way we wash our clothes,
> We wash our clothes!

'Now, mademoiselle, rinse it in the tank, wring it in the *eschorcheur*, and lo! it is done. I have been at work since four o'clock this morning, but I shall have finished by evening, and shall be at the class to-night; and my little Jules is well enough to go to your school again. It is difficult to keep him away from it, he likes to go so much.'

Having made a general distribution of tracts and picture-cards, which many wet hands were stretched out to receive, Mademoiselle Marcelline departed, to call on a sick man, amid a chorus of '*Au revoir!* We are all coming to see you to-night at the hall.'

Through a narrow doorway a little further on, Mademoiselle Marcelline passed through a long passage into an old court, and again under an archway into an inner court, in the centre of which stood an old well, whose waters had been condemned by the vigilant Paris police as unfit to drink. Round the court ran a row of old houses two or three stories high, the inhabitants of which had been driven by the stifling heat of their little rooms to seek the cooler air outside. A group of women were sitting under the shelter of the old well, busily chattering while they mended their husbands' clothes. In a

niche over the archway, under a glass shade, an image of the Virgin Mary held in close embrace a bunch of rather green grapes—the firstfruits probably of one of the vines whose branches were trained along the walls, the offering of some devotee in the court.

Little Red Stockings lay at full length on the stones, playing with a toy gun.

The entrance of the lady on the scene was hailed with expressions of pleasure. 'Ah, here is Mademoiselle Marcelline! Sit down, mademoiselle, with us, and read us a bit out of your big book.'

In the courts of old Paris there is often much lack of hygienic precautions, and fresh air was somewhat wanting in the little court in question; but Mademoiselle Marcelline accepted the invitation, and, sitting down in the midst of the group, began to read, as requested, in her 'big book,' commenting, as she read, on the marvellous love of God to sinners, and answering the questions put to her by her attentive hearers.

Tears were trickling down the cheeks of some.

'What lovely words!' said Madame Legros.

'It is the same book that is explained in the hall, is it not?' asked a new friend.

'Yes,' replied old Madame Jacquet; 'and it is like the sunshine to me to go there. Why did you not come before?'

'The gentlemen speak like angels, I tell my Jacques,' said Madame Bonot. 'He has not been to the hall yet, but I think he will soon.'

All of a sudden the conversation was interrupted by a sharp quivering cry, and a queer little old woman appeared from under the archway.

'Umbrellas, 'brellas, to mend!' cried the voice.

'Why, it is Madame Duval!' exclaimed Madame Leroi.

'It is a long time since she came round this way. The old lady must think we have lots of pennies to throw away. Umbrellas this weather would be too much luxury. We must wait till winter for that.'

'Umbrellas to mend, ladies?' asked the new-comer in a querulous, shaking voice.

Under her arm, hidden out of sight but for the sticks, that would poke themselves out beyond the folds of her cloak, she carried a bundle of old umbrellas which she was taking home to mend.

Poorly but tidily dressed, the old lady had a quiet dignity about her that told of better days and other occupations. The sad, wearied, harassed look on her face told of sorrow and suffering that claimed one's pity.

'Oh, Madame Duval, you are just the one I want to see!' said Mademoiselle Marcelline. 'I have missed you from our meetings. You are tired; sit down.'

Madame Duval bowed low, but declined. She evidently thought that 'the ladies' and little Red Stockings were amusing themselves at her expense, and her pride prevented her joining their company.

'I would like to call and see you,' said Mademoiselle

Marcelline to her, 'if you would allow me that pleasure. What is your address?'

Madame Duval hesitated. 'I live quite alone,' she replied, 'and see no one at home since my darling left me. But there, I live at No. 7, Rue du Phénix;' and she quickly disappeared out of sight.

CHAPTER IX.

THE GUARDIAN ANGEL.

'I WONDER Madame Duval gave you her number, madame, for she opens her door to no one. One day I heard a heavy fall, and I broke it open, and found her on the floor. She is rather queer at times, poor lady, she has had so much trouble! She was well off once; but a bad son ruined her, and a letter from him always upsets her. She lost her only remaining child, besides him, some few years ago—a sweet little girl. But hark! I hear her step on the stairs. Please do not say I spoke to you about her;' and the next-door neighbour disappeared.

Wearily and feebly Madame Duval mounted the long flight of stairs leading to her room on the fifth story, and with a sigh of relief put her key into the door as Mademoiselle Marcelline appeared from the opposite side and greeted her.

'You here!' she exclaimed. 'How did you find your way here? Who gave you my address?'

'Why, you did yourself! 7, Rue du Phénix. I am come to pay you a little visit.'

After a hurried scrutiny of the visitor's face, she said—

'Well, as you are here, you may come in;' and the old umbrella-mender led the way into her room.

A good-sized room it was, with a little balcony outside. Nasturtiums and *canariensis* were trained round the window-frame, making a kind of flowery bower, in which hung a little cage, where a canary was singing its 'welcome home' to its tired mistress.

Two beds, one a narrow child's bed, stood against the wall. A wardrobe, a little stove, a couple of chairs, and a square table, completed the furniture. A bundle of umbrella-sticks in the corner, and a pile of old coverings, whalebones, and buttons, etc., on the table, betokened the occupation of the proprietor of the room. A few pictures from the *Ami de la Maison* and the *Rayon du Soleil*[1] were fixed on the walls, and in one corner some shelves were fastened, on which stood a few books, children's books, a little doll, and various small articles and toys that make up a child's property.

'Sit down, madame, and excuse this untidiness; but, you see, my profession requires these articles. Mine is quite *a profession*, you know, and not merely a trade,' said Madame Duval, proudly. 'It is not every one who can do it. But now I have no longer my little darling, the room is not so tidy as it used to be. She kept it quite beautiful, and had everything ready and clean and bright for me, when I returned from my errands.'

[1] Two illustrated evangelical papers given away at the halls.

With a little expenditure of sympathy, it was not difficult to win the old lady's confidence, so she was soon with moist eyes relating her misfortunes, and telling about Charles, her bad son, and her guardian angel, little Angèle.

Mademoiselle Marcelline had observed a large Bible on the corner of the shelf fixed under the table, and, thinking she would like to read a few comforting passages from it to the sorrowful woman, she stretched out her hand to take it.

'Leave that alone! Do not touch that!' was the excited exclamation of the hostess, as she snatched the book out of her visitor's hands, repeating over and over her injunction, 'You must not touch it, I say!'

Then, quieting down and laying her hand on Mademoiselle Marcelline's arm, she said—

'Pardon me for having spoken so sharply to you, madame; but it was a promise to my child, you see. Well, I must tell you: my little Angèle put it there, and made me promise to let no one touch it but myself; and it must never be moved, never, except when I read in it, and put it back again. I leave everything as she arranged it. There is her little bed as it always stood, and the toys and the books she dusted every day, and that canary in the bower; I keep it all as she liked it, my guardian angel!'

'Why do you call her your guardian angel?'

Madame Duval's lip quivered as she looked earnestly into the face of her visitor, and replied—

'I will tell you all about it. Much trouble has

shaken my nerves, and at times my reason is clouded ; then my faith fails me, and wicked thoughts come into my head. My little girl knew this, and before she went away she said, " Dear mother, you must promise me that whenever you are tempted to do what God forbids, you will not go out till you have read over the texts I have marked for you in our Bible ; and look, you must always keep it here in this corner of the shelf, where I have put it, and nobody but you must touch it, or it may be misplaced, and when you are in trouble you will not know where to find it. So, dear mother, keep it here, where it will be under your hand ; " and I promised her before she left me. So you will excuse me, madam, for having refused it you.'

' Have you often been tempted ? '

' Yes, madame, several times since my little one left me. Once I had my bonnet on to go down to the bridge, but I remembered my promise, and sat down to read before I went. It was a struggle to do it, but I found the verses she had marked : " Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one ; " and I prayed that He would deliver me. Oh, I have prayed hard ! " Lord, deliver me from this horrid beast that prowls around me." Then I read another verse : " Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest ; " and another : " Casting all your care upon Him ; for He careth for you." And so I was quieted, and took off my bonnet, asking forgiveness for my thought, and help in my weakness. Oh, truly, " the devil, as a roaring lion,

walketh about, seeking whom he may devour;" but it is written, "*resist him*, stedfast in the faith;" and God gave me courage and grace to resist and overcome him. The Word of God is wonderful, madame; it calms and it strengthens me. But if my little girl had not marked the passages, I should never have found them, with my dazed head. Often in the halls, too, where I love to go, just the right words are read to quiet and help me, and the sweet singing sends away the wicked, tempting thoughts.'

'Yours is not the only case I know of,' said Mademoiselle Marcelline, 'where the wicked one, prowling round some poor tempted soul, has been driven off by the Word of God. In many cases his expected prey has been snatched from him. Men and women on their way to self-destruction, drawn in to one or other of the halls by the singing of the hymns, have been arrested and delivered by some text on the wall, or some word of truth from the lips of the speaker. A friend of mine told me she herself knew of nine such cases; men and women who had learnt for the first time the love of God for them, and were made happy in trusting that love. So do what the child told you; drink in strength for the fight from God's own Word, and pray and trust Him to deliver you.'

'That is the reason I call my Angèle my guardian angel. When alive she often saved me, and she does so still, through making me promise never to go down to the bridge without first reading the Word of God. Oh, what a loss she was to me! Life is sad

till I see her again; but I console myself as I think of her last words: "Mother, look up and see me with my Saviour above the stars, and so happy, dancing with the angels!" If only Charles would come back to me!'

'We must ask God to change his heart, and then he will come back to his mother's home,' said Mademoiselle Marcelline, as she said farewell.

Angèle is gone, but 'being dead yet speaketh,' as do numbers of other children, who had learned like her to say, 'I fear not death. I have inward peace, and know that it is for me that Jesus has done all.' Or like the little lad, who, having heard about the Saviour in one of the dispensaries, fearlessly and calmly prepared himself to meet death alone, requesting his parents to leave him in his dying hour, while he turned his face to the wall, and asked Jesus 'once again' to forgive him all his sins, and be with him as he crossed the river.

There lies Daphné Arondel in her little coffin, dressed in her best red frock, her hair carefully tied up with tricolour ribbons, as if for a fête, the little body covered with crowns of beads and flowers. Friends are standing round, listening with tearful eyes, as the parents relate how, a few days before her death, Daphné entreated her mother to dress her and take her once more to the *conférence* she so loved, that she might see again the face of the pastor who had led her on the way, and listen to the dear hymns as of old.

So the mother yielded to her entreaties, dressed her for the last time in her red frock, carefully tied up with tricolour ribbons her beautiful long hair, and then, wrapping her warmly up, carried her in her arms, so weak and pale, to her last *conférence* on earth. How the child's eyes glistened as they sang her favourite—

J'ai un bon Père, qui m'attend aux cieux,
Il me dit; viens, je vais à lui;
J'y veux aller dès aujourd'hui.

It was over. The mother carried her child home, and two days after Daphné lay in her narrow coffin, waiting the arrival of the Protestant pastor, who, at her own special request, was to perform the funeral ceremony. 'Not lost, but gone before,' she leaves her parents seeking to follow in her steps.

Time goes on. One generation succeeds another in the schools. Children come and children go. Once again on a fine summer day, in the beautiful park of Genvilliers outside Paris, where once kings and nobles paced the wide avenues, we meet a joyous, festive crowd. Flocks of children have come out, not in boats this time, but in vans, to spend under the greenwood shade their long-promised holiday.

Up there on the grassy mound, the rays of the setting sun sending a pink glow over the lake at their feet, massed around their flapping banners, a thousand children stand. Thirty-five schools are now represented, for the 'Juvenile Department' has grown, and these thirty-five schools are but the representatives of the hundred and thirty-eight

mission Sunday schools of France, with their nine or ten thousand children.

As the mind and eye take in the picture again, the question arises, 'Who are these, and whence came they?' Hope answers, 'These are the warriors of the future.' These are they from whose ranks, we trust, will go forth, in the days to come, the Luthers and the Calvins, the Fárels and the Knoxes, the Wesleys and the Whitefields, who will fight the battles of the Lord in France, and make His Name known. Already many have witnessed for Him in regiment and workshop and home. Many are quietly labouring in the harvest-field. Jeanne Huguenot and Madeleine are married, and bring their husbands and children to the halls.

Red Stockings, now respectfully addressed by his Sunday class as 'Monsieur Julius Bobineau,' Louis Coste, and others, give up their Saturday nights for preparation, and their Sunday afternoons to instructing in Bible truths these little fellow-citizens—no light self-denial in gay, attractive Paris after a week's hard toil.

We have spoken of 'treats' in woods and glades. Allow us one more peep at the children, this time gathered in the heart of Paris. Down in the Faubourg St. Antoine, near the Place de la Bastille, the once gaudy ballroom of the quarter is filled with eager little mortals—'another generation.'

Atheists and anarchists have in the past made those walls to resound with threats to God and man. Now they are re-echoing the praises of the God of

love, whom anarchists hate, and socialists ignore or despise.

In amazement a passer-by, drawn in by the singing, looks and listens, with difficulty taking it all in. As he hears the clear, earnest voices of 'the children of the people,' repeating verse after verse of the sacred Book, bringing prophecy after prophecy from its pages to prove that Jesus is the Christ, the promised Saviour of the world, he mutters angrily to himself, 'Is this the end of all our teaching? Are the coming race to adore and obey the tyrant-God we enlightened freethinkers have cast down? Nay, if the republican youth takes up these ideas, it is over with us, for "Thou hast conquered, O Nazarene!"' and away he goes, the joyous answer of a little girl of eight ringing in his ears—'Yes! yes! we have the right to go to heaven, for Jesus is come to save us. His blood has been shed to wash away our sins.'

While Christian onlookers repeat the words, 'We thank Thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight.'

CHAPTER X.

RAGS AND PEACHES.

We had gone out on a voyage of discovery in company with a friend, and were bound for Montreuil-sous-Bois, a place of some 19,000 inhabitants lying to the east of Paris. Taking our seats in the omnibus that plies between Paris and Montreuil, we were soon rattling over the stones up the long straggling street that intersects the town from end to end.

Montreuil, as every Frenchman at any rate knows, is celebrated for its peaches. Great luscious peaches measuring six inches round, and bringing in a fine sum to the cultivators, who get a long price for the twelve or fifteen million that ripen yearly in their little strips of walled gardens. Moreover, Montreuil is one of the great market gardens of Paris. Fruit, flowers, and vegetables of all kinds are grown there in abundance. Its sunny plain is gorgeous in summer and autumn with crimson peonies, golden marigolds, blue pansies, white pinks, purple violets, pyrethrums of all colours, that are every evening, each in their season, culled and packed away in baskets for the Paris market.

The *maraichers*, or market gardeners, dress and work like labourers, but live in palaces, it is averred. They are industrious, thrifty, and rich. Every inch of their plots of ground is cultivated; even along the roadsides vines trail on the fences, and cherry trees spread their fruitful boughs over the outer walls of the enclosures, offering a tempting but untouched treat to the honest little urchins that pass that way.

We met but few men as we tramped along. They were still taking their well-earned rest at home; for they pick and pack their produce in the cool of the evening, and get off to Paris in their carts in time for the early market at three o'clock in the morning, when, having disposed of their goods to the stall-keepers, they return home to get their needed sleep in their own comfortable, well-furnished houses.

Sunday is mostly a day of rest, and ofttimes the evening is spent by many of them at the little *salle de conférence* at the lower end of the town. To them, as to our friends and nearer neighbours, the *chiffoniers*, or rag-pickers, the sound of the gospel is all the sweeter because it is new.

Montreuil has responded in some measure openly to the loving call of the Lord by the mouth of His messengers, and a goodly number of converts from various classes have joined the Protestant churches of Vincennes and St. Marie. Indeed, it was to make inquiries as to the story and death of one of these converts—a poor *chiffonier*—that we had come to Montreuil; for among the better-dressed citizens

there was often in the hall a sprinkling of the despised classes of rag-pickers, Bohemians, and foreigners, who lived at the end of the lower town, and who, when they could find time and opportunity, stole up quietly to hear the big Book read, and to join in the singing of the well-loved hymns.

Before going further, it may be interesting to the reader to learn a little of the fraternity of rag-pickers, numbering about 50,000, scattered in Paris, or living by hundreds together in the suburbs of Clichy, La Villette, Montmartre, St. Antoine, and Levalos, victims sometimes of poverty, sometimes of misfortune, and often of vice.

Numbers of them have seen better days; but adverse circumstances and broken health, the wrong-doing of others, or their own misconduct, have incapacitated them for the struggle of life, and they go to swell the great army of failures that form the wreckage of society. Some, it is said, are of gentle, even of noble birth, who, having gambled away their patrimony, or squandered it in vice, have sunk down and down, till from sheer want they have been driven to the *hotte*,[1] crook, and lantern of the rag-picker to obtain their daily bread. Some are honest artisans out of work, and in 'hard days' have turned rag-picker for the nonce; while many are such by hereditary calling, and prefer it to all others. The value of the refuse passing through their hands has been computed by economists at about forty-six million francs, or in English money £1,840,000, per

[1] The long deep basket that is fixed at the rag-picker's back.

year; besides what they retain from the *debris* as food and fuel for their own families.

A *cité de chiffoniers* is usually composed of small houses, about twelve feet square and one story high, containing one room each, and running in double rows round some empty space, where the community can stack their carts and heaps of rubbish.

The atmosphere is not odoriferous, and fever is rarely absent from their quarters. Poverty is stamped on everything around them, but they make the best of their little dwellings.

The style of architecture is, to be sure, peculiar, and the materials employed still more so. Broken bricks, old planks, pieces of thick cardboard, sardine and biscuit tins broken up, old bits of carpet and tarpaulin, are used indiscriminately in the construction of their queer-looking shanties.

Politics being eschewed in the *cité*, except as regards the special interests of the community, the statues and busts of all great men can be utilized in the decorative department. A noseless Louis-Philippe makes a pair with a half-brained Napoleon III., on the parapets of one little house; while an armless plaster Gambetta keeps watch at the hall door over a heap of rags ready for *triage*, or sorting. The tiny balcony of the next neighbour is bright with potted geraniums, carefully saved from a gardener's heap. Close by, perched on a pinnacle, a stuffed crow gives life to the scene. The frontage of one house is garnished all over with little bits of

looking-glass, resplendent in the sun. Another is beautified with bits of gilt moulding from some theatre under repair.

No object of art is excluded within or without, and the *tout ensemble* is rather picturesque than grotesque, and gives satisfaction to the innate love of the bright and beautiful that characterizes all the children of La Belle France.

The rents paid for these little houses are high. One person, often a woman, owns the whole plot of ground, and charges half a crown or three shillings per week for each one-roomed house, and after some years, if she succeeds in obtaining her rents regularly, retires from business with well-filled pockets.

In the quarter we have described at Montmartre, from two hundred to three hundred persons lived.

At nightfall, summer and winter, the *chiffoniers* leave their quarters and tramp through the deserted streets and courts till dawn, or later, preceding the scavengers in their useful work, and carrying off from each house they pass whatever can be turned to profit by themselves or others. They return from their long rounds to sort, or *trier*, their goods at home. They earn from about fifteenpence to two shillings per day and night.

Rough and unkempt-looking they are, but they return civil greetings for civility, if not too astonished at the rare courtesy shown them. Ignorant, for the most part very ignorant, as to the truth, and having little knowledge of God, yet they listen quietly when spoken to, and often respond to the appeals made to

them in the *salles populaires*, to seek their own salvation.

Some time ago we visited, in company with an old French servant, the *cité* we have spoken of, and distributed a large number of gospels to the women and children about. They were received gladly ; the supply, however, did not meet the demand, and numbers who followed us through the little narrow passages called streets went away disappointed.

Many a sad tale we had to listen to as we tarried at the doors in Ann Street, Jacques Street, and George Street, once St. Ann Street and St. Jacques Street and St. George Street ; but saints had dropped out of fashion of late. A few kind words to the women sorting their piles of rags opened their hearts and lips, and many were the thanks we got for words of life and consolation, spoken as we were able to weary souls during that hurried visit.

Now, at Montreuil we were seeking information as to one who had heard and believed the Word of God that brought salvation, and this is his story.

CHAPTER XI.

ETIENNE THE CHIFFONIER.

In the palmy days of *chiffonage*, before Poubelle was king,[1] old Etienne, by working all night with basket, crook, and lantern, in courts and streets, could earn enough to keep himself tolerably comfortable, as he had only himself to provide for, being childless and a widower. The bits of wood and coke that he picked up from the rubbish-heaps before each door on his beat, sufficed to warm him and keep his pot boiling. Shreds of onions, ends of carrots, thrown away by thriftless cooks, flavoured his soup; while the rags and old bottles he sold, provided him with rent and comparative luxuries. But since the stern decree of the new chief of police, Poubelle, restricting the hours and places where rag-pickers might practise their industry, besides putting many difficulties in their way, poor old Etienne could barely earn enough to keep body and soul together.

A quiet, gentle old man he was, bowed down with age and sorrow. Better days he had once known, as before the war of 1870 Etienne had been a

[1] Poubelle, Prefect of the Seine in 1885.

master mason, and kept a comfortable home for his wife and children in Paris; but the terrible siege and the more terrible commune had ruined him. Little by little his home and its comforts melted away. His wife and his children died of the hardships they endured during the siege, or afterwards of disease contracted by the bad, scant food they fed on during the long cold months, and one day Etienne found himself left alone—quite alone, homeless and hopeless, his strength decayed, his capital gone. With no power left to struggle upwards again and recover his lost position, he was driven, a broken-hearted man, to the last lawful resource of the destitute—the basket and crook of the rag-picker.

In a rag-pickers' quarter at Montreuil, consisting of a double row of wooden huts, Etienne found a shelter. A decent, tidy man he was, as far as circumstances allowed him; but there was no wife or daughter to look after him. There was no air of comfort or brightness in the low, dark, unfurnished room, such as many a poor rag-picker's house possesses. The windows were curtainless, the walls bare. A tidily covered bed of rags, a tiny stove, a solitary chair, and a few utensils, were all that the room could boast of as furniture. With his failing strength, it was as much as he could do to provide himself with necessaries. His life was sad and monotonous.

One summer's day, ere going off on his nightly prowl, Etienne, passing down the long street, heard through an open door the voices of children singing. It may be that curiosity moved him, or the love of

music, or some memory of older and happier days. But, in the providence of God, Etienne was moved to enter the little hall.

A *conférence*, or meeting, was going on, and that night the children were singing a new hymn—*La porte de la grâce*, a French imitation of one of Sankey's hymns:

I stood outside the gate,

.

And Jesus let me in.

The words well described his own condition:

Le ciel était voilé,
La route était obscure;

Yes, *his* sky was very clouded, *his* way very dark.

Voyageur désolé,
J'errais à l'aventure.

Yes, he was a sorrowful wanderer, a waif and stray.

Et je cherchais en vain
La porte de la grâce.

'Mercy's gate!' Was he seeking, might he seek, for it? Mercy! pardon! Just what he needed. Who more than he?

Enfin tasse et transi
Je tombai sur la route.

.

Pitie je vais mourir!

Yes, yes! he was perishing. The deep sense of sin and danger filled his soul, and a yearning for pardon and peace was aroused within him. 'Mercy's gate;' the words rang in his ears. How? where find it? Would it open for him?

Et je la vis s'ouvrir
La porte de la grâce.
Et je vis, sur le seuil,
Debout dans la lumière,
Jésus! Quel doux accueil
Il fit à ma misère!
Je t'attendais! . . .
C'est moi qui suis la grâce!

How sweet it sounded! An open gate for sinners —for him! and Jesus waiting for him! The light shone into Etienne's heart. Mercy, pardon, peace! The way was open to the Father's house and heart, through Jesus the Saviour. Etienne grasped the truth and held it fast. Free, undeserved mercy for him, the sinner!

Then the light grew clearer and clearer as the preacher unfolded the certainty and beauty of salvation by the grace of God. Etienne's eyes glistened as he listened. He asked, received pardon, and went away rejoicing, for 'Jesus had let him in.'

Night after night he came to the hall, and then one Sunday found his way up to the organ-loft in the Protestant church of St. Marie, not far off. Every Sunday he was there, for now no work was done on the day of rest. Basket and crook were hung up in his little room, while Etienne drank in the ever-satisfying truth of Jesus' love and grace. Others, too, he led to the hall, telling them of mercy's gate, and how Jesus would let them in. From henceforth one absorbing, wondering thought was ever present— 'forgiveness for all his sins, for Jesus' sake.' How great His goodness and His power!

One bitter night in January, the snow deep on the ground, and a cold blizzard blowing, the old man, returning from an evening meeting at the hall, slowly and feebly crept up the narrow passage leading to his hut. He entered and shut the door.

A few hours later a tired rag-picker, bending under the weight of his well-filled basket, passed Etienne's window on his homeward way, and, by the light of the old lantern that swung creaking to and fro across the narrow passage, saw a dim white figure kneeling beside the low pallet, his head bowed between his hands.

'Old Etienne is late at his prayers to-night,' he muttered. 'He were better under the bed-clothes this freezing weather.'

'Thou art early at thy prayers, old man,' was the thought of a neighbour as he passed by to his work in the grey dawn, and noticed the motionless figure at the bed.

Yes, late and early! Etienne's last prayer was said and answered, his troubled life was over, his weary work was done. His Lord had come that night and taken him home. He was now singing his hymn of praise; the morning without clouds had dawned upon him.

CHAPTER XII.

LES FORAINS.

How can we translate the words? The English word 'foreigner' is evidently derived from *forain;* but the 'distinguished foreigner' who visits England might object to be classed with the itinerant showmen, strolling musicians, professors of pop-gun and thimble-rig games, owners of merry-go-rounds and Punch and Judy boxes, travelling tinkers, jugglers and fortune-tellers, dwellers in vans and carts, tents, and wooden *baraques* (or sheds); and so we should give a wrong meaning to the word in these days if we translated it 'foreigner.' And yet these people are all classified by the French authorities as *les forains*, and as such receive their licences to erect their booths, pitch their tents, and practise their several 'professions' at the fairs and fêtes that are yearly held in all the wards of Paris, and in all the towns and villages of France, the frivolity and gaudiness of which remind us so forcibly of the pictures of Vanity Fair that usually embellish the *Pilgrim's Progress.* Indeed, it is probable that the immortal tinker himself, had he been a Frenchman, would have been designated a *forain.*

As to the real root of the word, it may possibly mean vagrant, or wanderer—one who has no fixed dwelling-place.

Hundreds of *forains* itinerate over France, some as poor jugglers and strolling musicians, just earning enough to keep body and soul together, and others as owners of large wild-beast shows or successful puppet theatres, living in luxury, and leaving thousands of pounds to their heirs. Numbers of them are to be found camping for a time, or indeed sometimes permanently squatting, on the waste bits of ground in the suburbs of Paris.

We remember paying a visit to an Alsatian woman, the principal lessor, or perhaps proprietress, of such a plot not far outside the city gates.

A dry, stony parcel of ground it was, with a deep natural ditch, or ravine, running down the centre, on both sides of which were ranged rows of gipsy carts and waggons and caravans of all sorts and sizes, backed by wooden shanties, or *baraques*, each caravan or cart paying ground-rent at the rate of eighty francs per annum, and the sheds two francs per week to the chief lessor, who made a good living out of these sub-lettings.

Her tenants were a mingled multitude of many religions, nationalities, and professions. Jew and gipsy fortune-tellers occupied vans side by side: the Jew family recognized by their long black ringlets; their gipsy or Bohemian neighbours betraying their Eastern origin by the coppery-tinted limbs of the black-eyed baby, who was being dressed

on the steps of her mother's waggon. A little further on an itinerating tinker, mending his pans, was ever and anon conversing with some strolling players, who owned the gorgeous caravan close by; while a respectable-looking couple of basket-makers, man and wife, were busily repairing, under the shelter of their narrow-roofed cart, some bottomless chairs, or deep, large baskets, in which the flowers and vegetables of the neighbourhood were packed for the Paris market.

The *propriétaire*, or lady of the manor, a hale, sturdy, sunburnt woman of about fifty, an Alsatian, with a strong German accent, always preferring her '*b*'s' to her '*p*'s,' had wandered about a good deal in and out of her native country, and had at last cast anchor in the little plot of ground which constituted her kingdom. Madame Blot was a *grande dame* in the eyes of her tenants, whom it was in no wise deemed politic to offend.

Her own private mansion consisted of a long two-roomed cabin, the gable end of which was hung with old carpets, creating quite an aristocratic effect. The 'hall door' and single window were framed with rustic bits of wood and ornamentations of an undefinable nature; while at the other end of the cabin, in a small enclosure, heaps of empty barrels, iron hoops, old tools, broken china, and assorted rags indicated that, though somewhat high up in the social scale, she was not above turning an honest penny by purchasing and reselling 'marine stores' and other nondescript articles. A peep inside the house shows

us a comfortable-looking bed in one corner, piled up with books and pictures of all kinds, for Madame Blot has literary and artistic tastes, and is a connoisseur and collector of curious volumes and quaint, though not always valuable, articles of all sorts; but as to the orderly disposition of her treasures we will say nothing.

After a few words of polite greeting and explanation on our part, the suspicions of Madame Blot at the sudden and unexpected apparition of the visitor were laid to rest, and we were invited to enter and sit down—an invitation, however, we cautiously deferred accepting, for we had our doubts whether other inhabitants did not share with Madame Blot the warmth and shelter of the cabin. So we pleaded the sultriness of the weather, and asked permission, at once graciously accorded, to rest ourselves on the stump of a large tree conveniently placed just outside the door.

'You seem to be a great reader, madame, and must have many nice books to pass your evenings with.'

'Oh yes,' she replied; 'I love old books. I am a collector for my own pleasure. Old books are my special idea. See here, what a treasure I picked up yesterday. It is very, very ancient—of the eleventh century, I find—and it only cost me one halfpenny.'

'Have you read it yet?'

'No; I have little time for reading. Looking after my tenants, you see, takes a lot of time, as they are constantly changing. But look at the old letters and engravings, madame; it must be rare and old. I

am lucky to possess it.' She handed the priceless treasure on to me.

It was an old brown leather-covered book, worn and soiled, the find of some rag-picker probably.

We opened it. It was the first volume of *The Lives of the Saints*, dated 1750. The 'collector' had misread the Roman figures for the year.

'*Lives of the Saints*, I see. Do you care for this kind of reading?'

'Oh no. I do not care for those personages; but I bought the book because it was old and curious, and only cost me one sou. I began to collect books before I went to Algeria, but had to sell my collection when I left France, and could not gratify my taste till I returned home.'

'Madame has been a great traveller, then?'

'Why, yes. I have been hither and thither, up and down the world. Many years ago I emigrated with my husband to Algiers, and settled in a village near our northern boundary, and found work there until my husband got appointed to the canteen for the troops stationed there under General Chanzy. But one day my man got bitten by a pet monkey which had gone mad; and though my poor Auguste had his arm burnt with vitriol and then cut off, nothing could save him, and he died and left me a widow with my two young sons. Fortunately for me, I had a patron and friend in General Chanzy, who gave us a canteen, and we followed the army about.'

'How did General Chanzy become your friend?' we asked.

'It was like this,' she answered. 'When we were living in the village before we joined the army, the general had one winter to go with his troops into the mountains, to chastise an Arab tribe who had made a raid on our lands, and he and many of the soldiers got frost-bitten. The cold was intense, and they could not move. My husband heard of it, and he went and fetched the general away, and brought him to our house and put him into our own bed, the best in the village. We warmed him, and chafed and fed him, and so saved his life, and the general was grateful, and made my husband "chief canteeneer," and we moved after him from place to place to the various French settlements. We had to keep great fires burning in the middle and at both ends of these villages, for the panthers, lions, and hyænas were prowling round at night.

'Then after a while I left the army, and got a grant of a bit of land for a farm; but the lions and panthers, or the Arabs, dug under the cow-sheds and stole and eat my cattle.'

The chief canteeneer's widow got confused here, and to this day I am doubtful whether it was the panthers or the Arabs who stole and eat the cows. Anyhow, the cows were eaten or stolen or sucked to death, and Madame Blot, finding farming in Algeria too costly a pleasure for her, relinquished the occupation, and looked out for another.

'You must have been near neighbours of the wild beasts,' we said.

'Yes; our farm was near the forest, and all night

we heard their cries and howls. One night, before my cows were eaten, we were awakened by the most terrific and unearthly sounds. My son and one of our farm labourers crept outside the door to see what could be the matter. By the light of the fires burning round the house they witnessed a terrible battle going on between wild boars and panthers. The panthers, fiercest of all beasts, never devour the flesh, but only suck the blood of their victims. The hide of the wild boar is too tough for one bite to cause the blood to flow, so the panther aims at the throat of his victim, bites once, and flies up into the branches of the overhanging trees, out of the reach of the wild boar's tusks; then he darts down at him again and again, and bites and bites till the hide is pierced and the blood comes, when the cruel brute hangs on and sucks away the life-blood till the wild boar faints and staggers and dies.'

Her husband dead, her cattle eaten, and her Algerian farm given up as unproductive, Madame Blot and one son joined a company of miners going up to some ancient gold mines once worked by the Romans, but which had been lately leased by an Italian company. A long, weary, dangerous journey it was, through wild and savage districts. Huge fires were kept burning all night in the camp, while Arab scouts and watchers paced around.

Often the midnight cry of 'Panthers! panthers! awake! awake!' would startle the weary travellers from their sleep. They would hastily seize their firelocks and fire into the forest to warn off the wild

beasts. But the Arabs were not to be trusted, and so one of the Frenchmen always watched in the camp, lest their Arab escort should attempt to murder his slumbering countrymen. Each man took his turn, and, his watch ended, awakened his neighbour, and passed on his duty and his firelock to him. Sometimes the woman relieved the weary men, and sat down near the watch fire, musket in hand, catching every now and then the glowing eyes of the panthers crouching not far off in the branches of the forest trees.

At last the mine was reached, and five francs were earned per day washing the gold brought out from the mine; but it was poor pay where everything was so dear, and after a time, the mines having been sold to an English company, Madame Blot returned to France.

'Yours has been an adventurous life,' we said; 'and you must have had, doubtless, many deliverances.'

'Ah yes, my life has been in danger often from man and beast, from sickness and from want; but here I am, you see. The good God took care of me.'

'Yes; He, and no other, watched over you day by day. Did you remember Him in all your travels?'

'Well, madame, I must confess I often forgot to thank Him, and I was too much absorbed by anxieties and cares to think much of Him.'

'You love old books. Have you the best of old books, the Bible?'

'Well, I had one I took to Algiers, but lost it somewhere when moving from place to place. The pastor gave it me when I left France—for I am by birth a Protestant. I gave up reading it, for I had little time; but since I have come here and settled on this estate I go sometimes to the hall near here, and they gave me a Bible there. It is all my delight. I read it when I get a moment daily; but, you see, I have so little time; my tenants are always coming and going.'

'Yes, we are all "coming and going;" going away to the land from which none return hither; going to give account of ourselves to God for the things done in the body here,' we said.

'True, madame, true; but there is sin and sin. I am not a thief or a murderer; but I must give an account, and there must needs be a governor and a law and a judge. True, I am not sinless. It is time, as you say, to think of my salvation. I know the Lord died "for us all."'

The usual answer given, 'He died for us all;' a *general* belief, but no individual appropriation.

We sat and talked for some time longer, trying to lead our friend into the full light, for her eyes were dim and her mind confused.

Half persuaded, perhaps more, she softly repeated to herself the words, 'Yes, I must ask Jesus to forgive me; and I will read my Bible more.' Then rising, she said, 'Let us go to the people in the caravans, and you can give them your little gospels. I will introduce you.'

Rough, queer, ignorant as she was, Madame Blot had some idea of her responsibility to her tenants, and, in her way, desired their welfare. Van after van she took us to, telling the inmates it would do them good to go to the hall, and that she herself had found profit and pleasure in going there.

As Madame Blot was a person of importance in the eyes of the poorer folk, her advice was respectfully listened to, and the gospels she helped us to give to Jew and gipsy, juggler and tinker, were gladly accepted.

Stony ground on which to scatter seed, it may be deemed ; but the seed has sometimes fallen on fruitful patches of soil. Strolling musicians and itinerating showmen have been drawn to Christ, and found a settled resting-place in their unsettled life. Gospels dropped at fairs into vans and waggons have been used of God to the salvation of souls, and every now and then we unexpectedly hear of some poor *forain* who has become by faith a citizen of heaven.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE GRANDMOTHER OF GRANDMOTHERS.

'No, Angelica, thou art wrong! Butter, I tell thee, was six francs a pound.'

'Nay, granny, the bread, you mean. Just think.'

'No, I tell thee. Ah yes, yes; I am wrong. I remember it was bread I used to buy for my old father, and it was six francs a pound in those days. Only the very rich could afford to have it. But there, Angelica, one cannot remember everything, you know,' said the old woman, in an injured voice.

'Indeed,' we said, 'it is quite a wonder to us how, at your age, you remember all you do. In what year did you say you were born?'

'I was born in the year of our Lord 1788, madame; and you know in July, 1789, was the "taking of the Bastille." I always remember the year by that.'

'Why, that makes you 102!'

'Yes, I was 102 my last birthday. My daughter-in-law has my "papers," and you can see for yourself. There is my certificate of birth, and also my "marriage lines," as English bodies would say. So there is no mistake.'

'In what part of France were you born, Madame J——'

'Well, I was born at Verveille, in the Department of the Seine Inférieure—there, between Havre and Ivetot. Yes, yes; and I was married at eighteen; and twice married I have been, and,' pointing over her shoulder to the mantelpiece, she added, 'you can see both my husbands up there, facing one another, and there am I in the middle.'

We looked, and saw two gaudy oil-paintings of the gentlemen in question, in old-fashioned costumes. One a civilian in a blue coat, after the fashion of the First Empire, and the other in a gorgeous uniform of the time of Charles X. The lady herself was a very rosy, fair-haired, buxom woman of about thirty-five, with large blue eyes.

Age had so much changed the old woman's features that one could hardly recognize any likeness to the portrait above her; but as she sat in her wooden armchair, with her foot-warmer under her feet—for she said it was always cold weather now — one could believe she was the representative of the strong healthy woman of thirty-five of years gone by. Though much bowed, she was not infirm, and looked as if she would yet live some years longer. Tidily dressed in a warm stuff gown, with a clean white apron, a huge white cap with a frill nearly a quarter of a yard wide, shading her eyes from the light, she did credit to the widowed daughter-in-law who looked after her.

Perfectly intelligent and collected, she liked to tell

of her experiences in bygone days. Her memory, especially of her earlier years, was wonderful, so we had little difficulty in eliciting her history.

The first thing she remembered, she said, far, far back in the dim distance, was being lifted up in her mother's arms above the crowd to see Louis XVI. on the scaffold in 1793, in the Place Louis XV., afterwards renamed the Place de la Concorde.

How she came to be in Paris with her mother at that time, she did not remember; but the scene was one that would leave its impression on the mind and brain even of a very young child, and some children's memories are very precocious. The constant after-relation of the scene by her mother at home, would serve to keep it fresh in her memory.

'Ah! they did wicked, wicked things in those days; and, indeed, they do wicked things now, madame,' was her comment.

'She was in Paris at the time of the war and the commune, madame,' said her daughter-in-law, 'and was much distressed at all that happened.'

Then, as a young girl, she was chosen to present a bouquet to the Emperor Napoleon the First, when he passed through her village. She remembered, she said, how he dismounted from his horse at the inn to get a glass of wine or cider, and then she gave him the bouquet. Whether she got the traditional kiss or not, she did not say.

'And what did your father do?' we asked.

'He was a fiddler, and played at the country fairs for the dancers. He was often away from home;

but he cared for my education, and paid a reading-master to come to the house. There was no school, but the master went to the different houses round and taught those who wished it. I remember,' said the old woman, chuckling at the recollection, 'that he always used a match to point with, and I thought it droll.

'My father was a very good, kind man, and used to give wood to the poor during the cold winters; for it was very cold. We were four little children, and my step-mother was very harsh and unkind to us. I was the eldest, and often had to protect my little brother and sisters; but I had to go to work early.'

'And what was your trade?' we asked.

'As a young girl, madame, I used to spin and weave and make lace. I worked sometimes at one thing and sometimes at another. I knew how to do it all, and I earned three francs a day. And then I went to service at Caen with a lawyer's wife, a good Protestant lady, who was very kind to me, and I liked what she taught me.'

The good influence of the lawyer's wife was a life-long influence. Her kindness and teaching disposed the young girl favourably towards true religion, and in after years Madame J—— sought and loved the teaching she got in the mission halls. It was the teaching of her early years, the teaching of her kind mistress, that disposed her to accept it. Though more than sixty-four years had passed over her head since she left her service, the soft spot in her heart where

the good seed had fallen remained soft and unscarred; but the seed was long, long in fructifying.

'The times were hard, were they not, when you were young?'

'Oh yes—hard, hard! Life was sad and hard in those days. There was no cultivator in the fields; the men were gone or dead. We threw the seed into the untilled ground as we could. There was no bread, or it was so scarce and dear—it cost six francs a pound—that it was kept as a delicacy for the rich, the sick, and the aged. I always bought my old father a little. But we had to cut the rye in the green ear; we could not wait for it to ripen. We dried it in the sun, and then we boiled it, and made it into "stirabout;"' and the old lady turned her hand round and round, as if making a hasty-pudding.

'Of meat we had none; but twice a week carts came out from Rouen with salt fish, very salt and very hard. We had to beat it with a wooden shovel or a rolling-pin before cooking it, for we could not bite it else.

'The people were all very poor, and those who had fine clothes sold them for food; but there was only paper-money, or *assignats*. The churches were shut, the baptisms were secret, and the priests were in hiding. My father made a hiding-place for the priest in a house adjoining the church, so that he could run in there and hide when they came to hunt for him; it was in order to save his life.'

'You married early, Madame J——, did you not?'

'Yes,' she replied; 'I left service to marry my first

husband when I was eighteen. My first was a weaver, and worked at his loom in his own house, and I worked too sometimes. He was also a dancing-master, and, like my father, he played the violin at the fairs.'

'He had many professions,' we said, laughing.

'Yes, true. And it was a good thing for him that he could teach dancing, for he was taken to serve in the army under the emperor, and was made prisoner and sent to England. So, to make money, he taught the English to dance; for, you see'—peering up into our face out of the big cap—'they did not know how to dance in England; so he made a lot of money, and they were kind to him.'

Probably the old lady had never heard of Queen Elizabeth or of her stately dancing, so 'high and disposedly,' that she drew forth the admiration of the chronicler long before French fiddlers and dancing-masters came to England. Her gracious majesty may still be seen dancing, in the picture-gallery of the home of Lord De Lisle and Dudley at Penshurst. Madame J——, however, is not likely to go there.

But our friend and entertainer is awaiting further questioning.

'Your second husband, Madame J——, what was he?'

'Oh, he was a very fine man, a drum-major, and carried the big drum of the National Guard at Rouen! You see his portrait up there in uniform.'

A very gorgeous uniform it was, striped with red and yellow.

'They were very good to me, both my husbands,' continued the old woman, 'and my children too—very good; but they are all, all gone, and I am left alone! My youngest boy died last year, you know.'

'How old was he?' we asked.

'Just seventy-five when he died, poor boy! This is his widow, who takes care of me.'

'She takes up all my time, madame. I cannot leave her a moment, so I cannot work; but the Bureau de Charité makes her a good allowance, and she wants for nothing.'

'Yes, I know the French Government is very kind to aged people, and gives them a comfortable pension. At Madame J——'s age, I believe no request is refused?'

'Just so, madame. At the Salpétrière and the Bicêtre,[1] and in all the other unions, the inmates one hundred years of age and over may ask for anything they fancy, and the order is—"Everything they ask for is to be accorded them, and nothing refused."'

'When did you come to Paris, Madame J——?'

'Some time after the death of my second husband I came to live with my son, just before the war, in 1870, and came in for all its horrors and privations.'

Shortly after the war and the commune were ended a mission hall was opened in her neighbourhood. The pleasant recollections she retained of her Protestant mistress and her Bible teachings, and some inward desire to know more of the truth, induced her to

[1] The Salpétrière is the workhouse for women in Paris, and the Bicêtre is for the men.

attend the meetings. For many years too, till she was nearly a hundred, she was enrolled a member of the mothers' meetings held there; and as her age outnumbered by many years those of the other ancient dames who mainly, in that special quarter, formed the meeting, 'Grandmother of grandmothers' became her appropriate title.

The flickering light that had been so nearly quenched in her soul began to brighten and burn more clearly. Slowly, but surely, it increased; and though she never openly left the Church of Rome, 'being too old,' she said, 'to change her religion,' those who taught and visited her felt assured that she was resting for salvation on the merits and death alone of the Lord Jesus, and was one of His saved ones.

Prayer was her great delight and occupation. The lady who invited her from the hall was never allowed to go without one prayer, or even two.

'What do you do all day, Madame J——?'

'I pray, I pray—always, always,' was her answer.

The widowed daughter-in-law was a decided Roman Catholic. The 'boy' of seventy-five was rough and indifferent, and at first resented every attempt to appoach him, declining determinedly every invitation to go to the *conférences;* but the kindness, courtesy, and consideration with which he was treated by his mother's friend and visitor, an English lady, broke him down. The hat he ostentatiously placed on his head when prayer was offered in the room, was quietly removed when he thought no one was looking;

and, having been 'treated as a gentleman,' he said, by the gift of some old 'fine white linen garments,' provided from her husband's wardrobe, by the visitor's friend, he dressed himself in them as a fine gentleman, and honoured the meeting with his presence. He came after that regularly. The teaching, and a tract given him—*Reconciliation with God*—enlightened his eyes; and when he died he gave good hopes that when Madame J—— was called to her long-expected rest, 'her boy' would be there to greet his mother's arrival.

CHAPTER XIV.

IN THE WAKE OF THE BOAT.

No country possesses more navigable and beautiful rivers than France, and no country possesses a more perfect system of canals, spreading as a network over its whole surface.

The success that had attended the coasting expeditions of Mr. H. Cook's missionary boats, the Mystery and the Herald of Mercy, and the facility with which the last-named little vessel steamed up the Seine, and moored at the Quai de la Concorde, in the heart of Paris, in 1890, drawing on board thousands of persons of all classes of society, from the dock labourer to the minister of state, seemed to encourage the idea of utilizing the broad waterways of France as a means of conveying the gospel of the kingdom to far-off towns and remote villages.

Open-air meetings are not allowed by the French Government ; but the nearest approach to an open-air meeting is preaching from a little floating chapel, easily accessible, moored at the river-side, near some small town or rustic village, where an overflow of listeners can gather on the banks, thus pioneering

through the country and opening up the way for future effort.

The idea was taken up, and, thanks to the faith and generosity of French and Scotch, English and American, friends, the idea was carried out, and a beautiful new river-boat, the *Bon Messager*, or Good Messenger, was launched at Paris early in March, 1892; and, after remaining a few weeks there, was commissioned for service up the Marne on a trial trip, to be sent forth later to 'sow the seed beside all waters' that flow through La Belle France.

The Marne is one of the most beautiful rivers of France. Taking its rise in the Springs of Marnotte, in the Haute Marne, it winds its sinuous course through woods and forests, deep valleys and fertile plains, bearing on its placid bosom sixty-four isles; watering with its tributaries three departments, the Haute Marne, the Marne, and the Seine et Marne; bathing the feet of many thriving towns and smiling villages; and ending its useful, beautifying course by emptying itself into the Seine at Charenton, near Paris.

In the lovely month of May the Good Messenger started from the Pont Royale, in Paris, and was towed thirty miles up the Seine and the Marne to Meaux, in Brie, that ancient and much-tried town, whose history from first to last has been one long anguish, from fire and sword, famine and pestilence, civil strife and religious persecution.

As a sketch of Meaux, its past and present, may be interesting to the reader, we give it. The capital of

Brie, its proximity to Paris, and its connection with the rich and fertile country round, made it the coveted prize and prey of contending Gaul and Roman, of devastating Hun and piratic Norman, of French and English, Russian and German, who, each in his turn, from the first to near the twentieth century, pillaged and burnt and oppressed it.

The population were trained to combat, ever holding the sword unsheathed. The twang of the crossbow, the clash of armour, the shouts of the men of war, were for centuries familiar and constant sounds in the ears of the citizen of Meaux, though in times of peace the prosperity and trade of the town was great.

Of the old Gaulish city of Iatinium, rechristened by the Romans Meldis, a few vestiges still remain ; and not long ago could be seen the moat of the dungeon where the proto-martyr of Meaux was confined—St. Saintin, the disciple of St. Denis, who in the first century preached the gospel to the pagan Gauls.

Traditions still linger in the neighbourhood, of Bathilde, the pious golden-haired Saxon maiden whom Clovis the Second chose for his queen, and of Ifars, the Irish hermit-missionary, who dwelt in the neighbouring forest of Breuil, and who is now remembered as St. Fiacre, the patron of gardeners.

As we stroll about the quiet, prosperous town of to-day, memory and imagination are busy recalling and picturing the past. The Jacquerie committed in Meaux its worst excesses; and there they were routed

by the nobles they had besieged. Old Froissart chronicles the Battle of Meaux in 1358, and depicts the deadly struggle on the old bridge, over which thousands of the desperate and miserable peasants, the Jacques, as they were called, were hurled by their victorious adversaries into the river below.

Over the bridge we pass, and stand in the market-place. Farmers and villagers from the country round are selling to merchants and townsfolk their wheat and their cheeses, their vegetables and their flowers, as in the days gone by. On some such market-day, probably, Jean Le Clerc stood up to witness for his Master, and was branded with hot irons, as a heretic, for teaching His truth. From the midst of a sympathizing crowd a voice is lifted up—the voice of a woman and a mother glorying in the steadfastness of her son. The words ring in our ears, 'Hail to Jesus Christ and His standard-bearers!' Twelve months later Jean Le Clerc, the wool-carder, the under shepherd of the flock the weak bishop had abandoned, laid down his life for his Lord at Metz.

Meaux was the first city in France where the doctrines of the Reformation were publicly preached —in 1521, the year of the Diet of Worms. William Briçonnet, Comte de Montbrun, Bishop of Meaux, had summoned to teach in his diocese the two reformers, Jacques Lefèvre and Guillaume Farel, and lavished his silver and gold in providing the people with the newly translated French Bible.

So eagerly were the Scriptures received by them, so deeply studied, so faithfully proclaimed by life

and lip, in town and village, that the old name of 'Cats of Meaux,' or the 'Miauleux' (derived probably from the more ancient way of spelling the city, 'Miaulx'), was changed for the more honourable appellation of 'The Heretics of Meaux,' under which designation, indeed, all adversaries of Rome in France were at first classified.

Faithful witnesses there were in the diocese of Meaux. In 1546 the old ivy-covered tower, with its high-peaked roof—all that now remains of the castle of the Counts of Champagne and Brie—held imprisoned in its grim dungeons sixty heretics, of whom fourteen were taken out that year to be burnt alive, 'by order of the Parliament of Paris;' while in the same tower one hundred and twenty-five Huguenot captives, men and women, were slain by the sword, or hammered to death with iron hammers, on the black night of St. Bartholomew.

In the old cathedral, not far off, the eloquent Bossuet exhorted his hearers to join their praises and acclamations to his for the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes; and under those shady avenues and in his garden study above, he planned those persecuting measures that drove from his diocese twelve thousand families, who emigrated to happier lands, carrying with them their piety, their industry, and their blessing.

The quaint old mills, stretching on piles across the river, stand there still, and grind, as of yore, the golden corn they receive from the fruitful plains of Brie, 'the granary of France.' Other industries have

sprung up, but the spinners, the weavers, and the wool-carders, of whom Beza spoke as embracing the 'Reform' in numbers, are to be seen no more. The population now is mostly Catholic, though some two thousand Protestants are found there still.

As the Bon Messager is moored along the river-side, there is a great stir in the town. A new and unparalleled wonder has arrived—a beautiful boat, a floating chapel, with seats for one hundred and fifty; lovely hymns of praises are rising, and the gospels are given away as in Briçonnet's time, and the invitation to enter and listen is free to all.

In they crowd, men, women, and children, citizens, soldiers, and villagers, free-thinkers and devout Catholics, and to all the salvation of God is preached —a salvation not of work, but of faith.

How familiar, in that country, were those sounds once! They have died away, but now they seem to move anew the hearts of the hearers! A thousand people are standing on the bank, endeavouring to get in where only a hundred and fifty can sit or stand. Address after address is given; none are weary. 'Go on!' is still the invitation of the eager audience. As some leave, others crowd in till, late at night, the exhausted evangelist ceases, for he can speak no more.

Day after day, night after night, they come; and hour after hour they listen, their attention never flagging. What will grow out of it? We know not. But the villages must have their share of the good things, and the boat goes on to Trilport, a village of

nine hundred people, higher up the river, leaving a promise at Meaux to visit it later.

A hearty welcome is accorded by the rustics at Trilport. The young girls engaged in making their artificial flowers, an industry special to this village, lay aside their work, and come to learn, and help on, the hymns. Some have been at the services at Meaux. Old friends, too, walk out the three miles from thence to Trilport. They seem to cling to the teachers and the teaching.

The labours of the day are over, and the villagers pour down to the river-side. It is very, very hot in the little chapel, but crowds come night after night to join in the simple services and get the coveted little book at the end. Their ancestors of old loved that book, and suffered for their love. On river bank, in shady dell, by cottage fireside, and at the loom, they studied it ; and strangers from Picardy, Normandy, and Champagne, seeking harvest-work, as they still do, in the fertile plains of Brie, drank in the truths they heard, and went home rejoicing, to witness for it among their own folk. Will it be so again ?

Meanwhile the villagers of Trilport are storing away knowledge—the knowledge of God and of His love to sinners. Those who cannot get into the Bon Messager are sitting on the piles of timber that lie along the river-side, and catch the words of the preacher through the open windows, every word being heard in the clear, still atmosphere.

Some hearts are touched. One man confesses, ' I

have not prayed to God for twenty years! I had forgotten Him; but now I know Him better I shall pray to Him again. But stay and teach us. Why need you go? We want you here.'

'He seems to have hold of the truth,' says one who had watched and questioned him. 'The seed has taken root in his heart'—the seed sown beside the waters of the placid Marne.

Some remain behind to get a more complete view of the wonderful boat. They admire the beautiful tricolour arched windows and the pretty Gothic roof. They peep into the little sleeping and sitting rooms of the captain and his wife, and wonder how all the cooking can be done in the tiny kitchen; they gaze awhile at the ivy-embowered windows at prow and helm, loth to go, and at last depart quietly homewards by the glorious light of the summer moon, to talk over all they have seen and heard, and to remind themselves that once, long ago, their ancestors were also *de la Réligion*, as the doctrines of the Reformation were called.

The busy day is over; the captain and his wife, evangelists and teachers both of them, sit down on the little deck under the star-bespangled sky. All is calm and still. No sound but the rippling of the wavelets against the sides of the boat, and the rustling of the reeds and flags along the shore. Suddenly the stealthy movements of some creature, just emerging from the shadow of the many-arched bridge that spans the river, arrest their attention, and then the sound of lapping reaches their ears.

In the bright clear moonlight they discern the shaggy form of a large grey wolf. The 'springs of the valleys' are dried up by the drought, and the wild beasts creep out at night to slake their thirst at the broad stream.

Startled by some sound in the village, the poor animal springs up the sloping bank and slinks back to the depths of the neighbouring forest, where the she-wolf rears her whelps, and the wild boar has his lair.

But the boat and its crew must now leave their friends at Trilport. In spite of pressing and tender entreaties to 'remain with them for ever,' it must bid adieu to Trilport friends and respond to the invitation of the municipal counsellors of Germiny l'Evêque, and pay the long-expected visit to its rural population.

'You are one of the boat ladies, I think,' says a village woman at the market in Meaux to us. 'When are you coming to Germiny, madame? We have been looking for you a long time.'

The haymaking is over at Germiny. All the fields around the pretty, prosperous-looking village are dotted with haycocks, and the sunburnt lads and maidens are glad to have a respite from their toil to visit the beautiful 'chapel,' as they call it. There is a village fête a few miles off on the opening day, Sunday, and we fear the attractions offered them will keep the rustics away; but a young girl reassures us, saying, 'The boat is considered as part of the fête, and the people are sure to come.' And she was right.

The peasants have made up their mind to spend the evening on board ; and just as the setting sun is lighting up with crimson splendour the windows of the little village, and flushing with its glory the waters of the green-fringed Marne, the holiday-makers return from the fête, and come trooping down from the high-road, from a breach in the wall, and pour into the boat.

Already during the day the Sunday school has been organized ; the village priest had given the children permission to go, and the children asked no more. A little choir has already been formed, and has learnt three hymns for the evening service, and passages of Scripture have been committed to memory ; for the evangelist from Paris comes out early, and begins his work at once, while many of the children's parents and some of the grandees of the village drop in and listen approvingly.

Germiny l'Evêque is one of those healthy rural places not too far from Paris where weary citizens love to go and rusticate in the summer months ; and several Parisians rise up to testify their pleasure that the villages were now to profit by the teaching they themselves had delighted in when in the city halls, and the local doctor, lawyer, and counsellors welcome the boat and its friends to Germiny.

Some weeks pass in happy intercourse ; then the captain talks of moving higher up the river to another small town, where they are awaiting him.

'Nay ; stay, stay with us a little longer,' is the constant cry.

Fain would the captain go, but finds, to the great delight of the villagers, that the *chomage* is begun, when by order of the authorities all traffic and passing on the river is suspended, in order to clear away, while the water is low, the reeds and weeds that grow so rapidly and impede the passage of the timber barges up and down the river. For felling, carrying, and floating the fine timber of all sorts that grows so abundantly on the banks of the Marne, constitutes one of the principal industries of the country, and provides occupation and comfort for many a smiling village embosomed in its picturesque and wooded valleys.

Besides, the water is shrinking daily in the great drought, and it is now too shallow to allow the boat to be moored along the side of the river 'at the next village'—so say the inhabitants of Germiny l'Evêque ; and they laugh and rejoice that the captain perforce must remain where he is.

The boat, however, is towed into the middle of the stream, where the water is deeper. How are the people to get at it ? Well, they are not to be balked. 'Some one' owns and lends a small boat that draws but little water, and it can carry the audience through the shallower water near the brink and land them on the 'chapel' a few at a time. It takes a little while, but all patiently wait their time to go and return ; and the little ferry-boat plies to and fro, and the Bon Messager fills and refills constantly.

The *chomage,* or 'block,' is over, the river rises again, and the missionary vessel resumes her voyage

to La Ferté-sous-Jouarre, once a stronghold of Protestantism, a small village-town of about five thousand inhabitants, many of whom are engaged in the making of the great grindstones used in the mills of Meaux and elsewhere in that corn and grain growing country. So celebrated once were those grindstones, that they had a market even in the New World. One sees them still everywhere in the shop-windows of La Ferté.

The pretty town welcomes its visitor moored just under the fine bridge. Precious seed is sown, as all along the river ; friends are made and hopes expressed for a less hasty visit next time. Then up the river, through the vine-clad hills and valleys and plains of Champagne to Epernay, the centre of the champagne wine trade, an important town of eighteen thousand inhabitants.

A great field is open there, for two outlying suburbs, thickly populated, have neither Catholic church nor Protestant temple. Great is the interest and earnestness displayed by the audiences who crowd the boat from those parts, and loud the lamentations when it leaves. The trial trip of the Bon Messager has been most successful, proving how open France lies to all missionary effort. How pressing are her needs ! how promising the harvest !

CHAPTER XV.

ROYAL RHEIMS.

THE sight of Meaux and Epernay naturally leads one on to visit Rheims. We had long wished to see that historic city and its many interesting features; so to Rheims we went, in company with a friend. Rheims has ever been specially connected with the sovereigns of France. Clovis, the first King of France who professed the Christian faith, was baptized on Christmas Day in the year 496 A.D., by the bishop St. Rémi. In the magnificent cathedral all the Kings of France have been crowned and 'anointed.'

Rheims still sits enthroned amidst the vine-clad hills. Its archbishop still ranks as the Primate of France. Its cathedral is the most majestic in the land. But kings no longer go there to seek their golden crowns. The unfortunate Louis XVI. was the last king on whose head the 'holy oil' was there poured from the 'sacred vial' of Clovis, and that head was laid low by the executioner's axe.

As, after a hard, long climb, we wander over the roof of the cathedral, and twist and turn among the

endless lofty buttresses, round giddy corners, and along narrow ledges, stopping every moment to admire the many hundreds of beautiful statues that adorn every nook and pinnacle of the stately fane, we notice that the whole history of the Bible is illustrated there, from the stories of David, Saul and Jonathan, Boaz and Ruth, and the achievements of the Kings of Israel, to the facts and miracles of the Gospels. Every important personage is represented there in characteristic and 'living,' though stony, statue.

Then we come on knights in armour and Kings of France in royal robes, and suddenly we perceive in a remote corner a short, headless figure, his head lying at his feet. It is Pepin le Bref—Pepin the Short—Mayor of the Palace, father of Charlemagne, and stock of the Carlovingian race. We question the guide, but he cannot tell us how the head came there. He says, 'It was always there'!

No sign of violence can be seen about it. It lies quite naturally between the owner's feet. Is it the work of some revolutionary fanatic, who exulted in neatly decapitating, *as he thought,* the representative of the Capets? or was it the freak of a prophetic sculptor, who saw in Pepin le Bref the type and root of that 'royalty' which was to be cut off and be laid low—perhaps for ever?

Yet, though Rheims can no longer boast of being the scene of the coronation of kings, there are still 'kings' in Rheims! Anointed kings, who one day will be crowned, not on earth, but in heaven, by the

'King of kings' Himself. As we passed down the street in company with the Protestant pastor, a faithful, ardent missionary, we heard the history of some of these 'kings,' poor weavers, wool-combers, engineers, etc.—fierce, ignorant rebels once, not long ago rejoicing in the name and the deeds of anarchists. The wool trade is one of the staple trades of the country, and the cloth and flannel looms of Rheims give employment to thousands of hands, among whom are a great number of Protestants, some of them the descendants, probably, of the persecuted spinners and weavers of Meaux.

For many years nothing seems to have been done by the Church at Rheims to provide spiritual teaching for the poorer class that still professed to be Protestant; spiritual ignorance, indifference, and atheism prevailed. A few years ago, however, at the entreaty of the pastor, the Church generously provided two mission halls in the quarters of the working population, and thither the pastor and an evangelist draw the Protestant workmen, who invite and bring with them their Catholic comrades. Many of the men who came were wildly anarchical in their views; but the loving courtesy, the ceaseless, kindly interest in their welfare, the friendly sympathy in trouble of the pastor, won their confidence and gratitude. They came and listened to truths they had never heard before, and many were melted under the greatness of a love they had never conceived. Of the Word of God read to them, many a man could declare, like one of his countrymen at Cannes, 'I never knew

there was such a book in existence!' Indeed, ignorance is at the root of much of the unbelief with which the French as a nation are credited. How true are the indignant words of an anarchist of Algiers, who, after attending a meeting in one of the mission halls there, said to the evangelist on leaving, 'You ought to proclaim on the house-tops what you have said to-night. We are without God, without faith; we have been robbed!'

'I am now taking you,' said the pastor, 'to visit two families in whom I am greatly interested. All the members of both families were ardent anarchists, and most dangerous people. They were persuaded by some of their fellow-workmen to come to the conferences. I visited them, and little by little their hearts opened to receive the gospel as lost sinners. I admitted them into our Church last year. They are now regular attendants, and most satisfactory converts.'

We had reached the door of one of these families, and were cordially invited in by the mother, who was standing on the steps. A hearty shake of the hand was given the pastor by all the members present. He was evidently looked on as their best and dearest friend, and a pleasant greeting was accorded to ourselves, as seats were set for us all.

'It is a long time since we have had the pleasure of seeing you, monsieur le pasteur,' said Madame B——, 'and I have lots to tell you.'

'It is not so very long ago, I think,' said the pastor, laughing. 'I think it must have been last week I was here.'

'My wife would like to see you every day. She is never so happy as when you are here, listening to all her tales,' said her husband, smiling.

He was quite an elderly man, with a pleasant, intellectual face, an engineer in one of the great cloth factories in the city. Once a fierce anarchist, as his wife was also, he is now a child of God, and a helper of the work at Rheims among his fellow-workmen.

The wife's genial, motherly face was beaming with pleasure as she related to the pastor how she had persuaded such and such a neighbour to attend the meetings. How hopeful she was of one poor sick man she was visiting; and how she had formed a plan, with his approbation, for the winning of the children to the schools; and she wanted advice on the difficult subject.

'You see, madame,' said the husband, turning to us; 'you see we must do our best for the Lord now. We have wasted much time before we knew Him. And monsieur le pasteur has been such a friend to us, we like to do all we can to help him.'

As we left the large, clean, pretty parlour where we had been sitting, and bid *au revoir* to the father, mother, and daughters, clustered round the door, and stepped into the street, the pastor said to us, 'That family, and one other, are my best workers. As to Madame B——, she is invaluable in the schools—my right hand. I do not know how I should get on without her.'

'Is Louis at home, Madame G——?' asked the

pastor, as we stood in the little garden before one of the artisans' cottages, in a street close to the one we had left.

'Louis is just home from the factory,' replied his wife, a comely young woman with a child in her arms, and another clinging to her skirts. 'Will you come in?'

'Just for a few minutes,' replied the pastor. 'I have brought you some friends to see you this morning. These ladies wanted to know something of the work here, so I have been taking them to see a few of our friends.'

'The friends of monsieur le pasteur are always welcome,' said Louis, a fine young man of about thirty, who had just come in.

He was a weaver, engaged in one of the flannel looms, earning good wages, industrious, and keeping a pretty and comfortable home for his wife and children. The happy look of content on all their faces struck one.

The man was rather shy, and did not say much. To some remark of ours he answered, 'Yes, all is changed. I know the Lord now, and I am glad.'

He too had been a determined and discontented anarchist, a rebel against the laws of God and man; but the look of scowling defiance that lowers on the brow of the anarchist had disappeared. The star of patient hope—a glorious hope—had risen for him, and diffused a happy look of peaceful content over the once troubled countenance. He had learnt that

'godliness with contentment is great gain;' and that he that possessed Christ possessed all things.

On our homeward way a sturdy-looking artisan touched his hat as he passed us.

'Another of my revolutionary friends,' said the pastor, smiling. 'He is not yet convinced—far from it. The police know him well; but lately he has been coming to the hall. Fortunately, he likes me, and listens to me; and I have hopes, too, of him. At present our opinions don't agree, as you may imagine. But I have great hopes of winning him for the gospel.'

'We know what wonders the love of God can do, in melting and changing the heart,' we said. 'Do you remember the words of an anarchist not long after the commune? He had been listening as if fascinated to the words of an evangelist in one of the halls he had entered by chance. The unfolding of the love of God in giving His only beloved Son to suffer and to die "for the ungodly," for His enemies, moved him deeply. Coming up to the preacher at the end, he said, "I have often embrued these hands in blood, I have often trodden over the corpses of my friends and of my foes, yet I never shed a tear; but this love I cannot stand!" and the tears fell down his cheek.'

Even into the hard heart and darkened conscience of the communist and the anarchist the light of truth and love can shine, convicting of sin, melting the stony heart, and evoking the cry for pardon from a forgotten and offended God. Blessed words for

these: 'This Man receiveth sinners,' and will 'in no wise cast out those who come.'

'You have done much evil, then, in your life,' said a Christian gentleman to a man whom the Word of God had pierced to his very soul, in Paris.

'Yes, sir,' was the reply; 'I have done much evil, and some good. But the good I did with the tips of my fingers, and the evil I did with the whole strength of my right arm. Is there pardon for such as me?'

Happy privilege to comfort the troubled heart of such a one by telling him, 'It is written, "The blood of Jesus Christ"—God's Son—"cleanses from all sin"!' Happy sight to see the sinner turning from his sin, and to watch the new life and its influences purifying heart and home!

A policeman once said to a pastor in a large town, 'Sir, can you tell me where the anarchist Z—— is?'

'I would not tell you if I could,' replied the pastor. 'It is no business of mine.'

'I know you can tell me,' insisted the policeman; 'for those folks receive you as a friend, monsieur le pastor. I know you have somehow made them love and respect you. You have more influence than any one with them. Ah! your life, I know, is the safest in the city. Not a finger will any of them raise on you.'

'Well, then,' said the pastor, laughing, 'let me do my work, and you do yours. But I will tell you one thing. The man you seek is not here; he is absent. Do not waste your time looking for him. But that man, I tell you, is likely to give up his evil ways,

and become ere long an honest citizen. So do you do your work, and leave me alone to do mine.'

The policeman goes away satisfied; for he well knows that his best ally is the pastor, and the success of his evangelistic work means a lightening of his own labours and responsibilities. The police can detect and often hinder crime, but somehow the Christian evangelist can do better. His influence and his teaching reclaim the vicious criminal, so that he becomes permanently a law-abiding, peaceful citizen, and troubles the police no more.

By the declaration of the police authorities, twice made within these twenty years, that 'in the quarters where the McAll mission halls exist there is a perceptible diminution of disorders and vice,' 'and fewer police are needed,' and by the presentation lately to Dr. McAll of the Legion of Honour in recognition of twenty years' unremitted and successful efforts for the 'moralization' of the French people, the authorities, or the Government rather, have borne valuable, though probably unintentional testimony to the 'moralizing' and fruit-producing power of the gospel; for no other instrument or agency is employed in the mission for the uplifting of the hearers.

And the future of France—what of that? We will quote a few words of a veteran servant of God, Pasteur Hocart, of the Wesleyan Church, which were spoken on the twentieth anniversary of the McAll Mission. He says, 'Whatever may have been, up to this time, the blessed results of this Christian work

in conversions and spiritual fruit—and I know for a fact that these have been considerable—I see in the present state of evangelical mission work in France a preparation for future work, perhaps very near at hand—a work much greater, much deeper and much more extensive than we see to-day. An indirect but mighty influence is exercised on all who attend the meetings.'

No one band of workers in the great enterprise of winning France for Christ for a moment claims any monopoly of gospel teaching, 'conversions,' 'rewards,' or 'hope.'

The blessing accorded to any one has been, and ever will be, shared by all others who are faithfully working for their Master in France, whether it be in the various French Protestant Missions, in the McAll Mission, in the Wesleyan Mission, the Belleville Mission, and others, or the more private and individual efforts of evangelization carried on in many of the villages of France, the workers in which can all testify, in the words of a French writer, that 'the French people, so full of fun, have their ears always open to any one who speaks to them in earnest.' By the preaching of the simple gospel of salvation, souls are being daily brought to Christ. And let all friends, both in England and the United States, whose interest is so deep in evangelizing efforts now being put forth in France, continue their prayer of faith and labour of love; for the work is of God, and He will cause it to prosper more abundantly in the future than it has even in the past.

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